

**Will the Ripples Collide?
A Critical Look at the Impact of External Quality
Assurance Process on an English Language School**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, in order to better cope with the increasing number of higher education institutions in the region and thus, the inevitable competition, the validation of their programs by an external/international accreditation body has become the primary objective for some universities in North Cyprus. The Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) is not an exception to this movement. This research aims to discover the perceived impact of external quality assurance process (run by Pearson Edexcel Assured) on the development of certain pre-defined internal quality management and assurance strategies which are maintained to reinforce organizational learning within the specific context of the English Preparatory School at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU EPS).

To this end, the study focused its specific attention on the perceived impact of Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process on the development of core strategic building blocks of a 'learning organization' (i.e., 'clarity of purpose and mission', 'shared leadership and involvement', 'experimentation', 'effective transfer of knowledge' and 'teamwork and group problem-solving') at EMU EPS. Adopting a descriptive case study design, the study aimed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from three different groups of internal stakeholders: the Leadership team, the EPS teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process, and the EPS teachers who were not directly involved in the process, by means of a survey and semi-structured interviews. In addition, publicized documentation such as policies and procedures, or documents produced by the Continuing Professional Development working group, which were located on the school premises and the

school's official online communication portal, was used as supplementary qualitative data in order to support the discussions drawn from the data gathered from the participants.

For the data analysis, a number of methods were used depending on the sort of the data gathered. The quantitative data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics. For the qualitative data, content analyses were conducted following the guidelines provided by Berg (2001). In this respect, a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning was applied, and the data were thematically coded into categories of emerging patterns of the participants' views on the core components of a learning organization and the impact of the accreditation process on these attributes.

The findings yielded interesting results indicating differences in the perceptions of the internal stakeholders not only as regards the degree of formative impact of Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process, but also regarding certain internal quality management and assurance practices such as professional development initiatives. Therefore, it is hoped that the results will serve for a better understanding of the continuing professional development initiatives in the ELT world by providing well-grounded impetus for further in-depth studies.

Keywords: Accreditation, academic quality management and assurance, learning organizations, English language teaching.

ÖZ

Son yıllarda Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta faaliyet gösteren yüksek öğrenim kurumlarındaki sayısal artış ve dolayısıyla artan rekabet nedeniyle, programlarının iç ve dış denetim kurumları tarafından akredite edilmesi bu kurumların bazıları için birincil hedef haline dönüşmüştür. Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi (DAÜ) de bu kurumlardan biridir. Bu çalışma, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu (DAÜ İHO)'nda, kurum dışı bir organizasyon (Pearson Edexcel Assured) tarafından yürütülen kalite güvence sürecinin, söz konusu okulda kurumsal öğrenmenin gerçekleşmesi yönünde önceden tanımlanmış kurumsal kalite ve güvence stratejilerinin gelişimine olan algısal etkisini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu amaçla çalışma, DAÜ İHO'da Pearson Edexcel Assured tarafından yürütülen akreditasyon sürecinin, 'öğrenen örgüt'ü oluşturan temel stratejik yapıtaşlarını (yani, 'amaç ve misyonun netliği', 'paylaşımçı liderlik ve katılım', 'deneyimleme', 'etkili bilgi transferi' ve 'takım çalışması ve grupsal problem çözümü'ni) geliştirmedeki etkisinin, söz konusu kurumda nasıl algılandığı konusuna odaklanmıştır. Betimleyici bir durum çalışması olan bu çalışmada nirengi yöntemi baz alınarak, üç ayrı grup (okul yönetimi, akreditasyon sürecinde aktif rol alan öğretim elemanları ve akreditasyon sürecinde aktif rol almayan öğretim elemanları) ile gerçekleştirilen anket ve yüzyüze görüşmelerle, hem niceliksel hem de niteliksel veri toplanmıştır. Anket ve görüşmelere ek olarak, gerek okul içinde Sürekli Mesleki Gelişim Çalışma Grubu'nun ürettiği, gerekse okulun resmi iletişim aracı olarak kullanılan portalda yer alan dökümanlar da, katılımcılardan elde edilen veriyi destekleyici nitelikte kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmada toplanılan verinin niteliğine bağlı olarak farklı veri analizi metodlarına başvurulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, toplanılan niceliksel veriler betimsel istatistik yolu ile analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen niteliksel veriler ise Berg'in (2001) sunduğu esaslar ışığında yapılan içerik çözümleme yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Bu şekilde, çalışmada yer alan grupların, öğrenen bir örgütü oluşturan yapıtaşları ve akreditasyon sürecinin bu yapıtaşları üzerindeki etkisi konusunda dile getirdikleri görüş ve yorumlarını kapsayan niteliksel veriler, hem tümdengelim hem de tümevarım muhakeme yöntemleri kullanılarak tematik olarak düzenlenip kategorilere ayrılmıştır.

Bulgular, hem Pearson Edexcel Assured akreditasyon sürecinin okul üzerindeki gelişimsel etkisi hem de mesleki gelişim gibi okul bünyesi içinde başvuru kalite yönetimi ve güvencesine yönelik çalışmalar konusunda, çalışmaya katkı koyan okul paydaşları arasında görüş farklılıkları olduğu yönünde düşündürücü ve aynı zamanda konu ile ilgili farklı çalışmalar geliştirilmesine yön verebilecek nitelikte sonuçlar ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akreditasyon, akademik kalite yönetimi ve güvencesi, öğrenen örgüt, İngilizce dil eğitimi

To my parents and sister for being the light in times of darkness

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background, the problem statement, the purpose and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Accreditation, as defined by Hedmo (2002, as cited in Lejeune, 2011), is

the process whereby an organization or agency recognizes an education institution or programme as having met certain predetermined qualifications or standards, outlined by the accrediting organization. Inherent in accreditation activities is the process of self-study and evaluation, guided by standards which are written and endorsed by academic peers (p. 1537).

However, in the literature it is possible to encounter such arguments whose main concerns are whether or not external and internal quality assurance practices in (language) education complement each other, or more specifically, whether the values they incorporate or the motives behind their adoption are compatible in order for external quality assurance processes to have impact on continuous institutional quality enhancement and transformation processes (Dano & Stansaker, 2007; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Gynnild, 2007; Tam 2001).

Furthermore, despite the fact that accreditation is not a new undertaking for higher education institutions or as for language schools in different parts of the world, it is a

relatively new pursuit in North Cyprus. In recent years, in order to better cope with the increasing number of higher education institutions in the region and thus the inevitable competition, for some universities in North Cyprus the validation of their programs by an external / international quality assurance body has become the primary objective. Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) is no exception to this new focus. As a result, many departments or schools at the university either are on the verge of finalizing their preparations for site visits or have already been accredited. The English Preparatory School (EPS) is one of the schools at Eastern Mediterranean University which has most recently been granted a quality assured status by an international quality assurance body, Pearson Edexcel Assured.

EPS is one part of the EMU Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS). Furthermore, Pearson Edexcel is not the first international quality assurance body which the school has had an external quality assessment experience with. In 2008, the school went through certain stages of an accreditation process with the European Association of Quality Language Schools (EAQUALS). However, the process was left unfinished and incomplete due to the economic difficulties that the university was experiencing at the time and the measures being taken to overcome it. After a pre-inspection visit which was followed by a report, including an array of recommendations, the process was halted.

In 2010, with a new Leadership at FLEPS, accreditation became the priority once more. In the same year, a Steering Committee made up of three members was established. Following this, it was determined that as a first step, undergoing a

relatively less challenging external quality assurance process would help motivate and prepare the staff for a prospectively more demanding process required by such ELT quality assurance organizations as EAQUALS. To this end, upon the recommendation of the Steering Committee, in the fall semester of the 2012-2013 academic year, it was decided to align the school's benchmarks with the quality standards of Pearson Edexcel Assured.

Pearson Edexcel Assured is a private and international quality assurance organization, and it bases its assessment of the educational programmes on a framework made up of five quality indicators:

1. learner support,
2. resources and environment,
3. quality management systems,
4. administrative arrangements,
5. assessment and verification (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document).

In 2013, with the establishment of the Accreditation Advisory Board at FLEPS, the newly formed Steering Committee included representatives from different divisions and units who were responsible for a variety of operations taking place within the whole school. The Board was composed of nine members:

- the assistant director responsible for institutional and policy development,
- a consultant specialized in leadership and productivity,
- the coordinator of professional development at FLEPS,
- the organizer of the continuing professional development working group,

- the organizer of logistics and timetabling,
- the coordinator of the promotions' unit and student welfare,
- the coordinator of academic affairs at English Preparatory School,
- the coordinator of academic affairs in the Modern Languages Division, and
- the coordinator of testing and moderation in the Modern Languages Division.

The members were assigned to work on the quality indicators which reasonably corresponded to the area they were responsible for. In this respect, the assistant director and the consultant were not only overseeing the whole process but also working on Quality Indicator 4 (administrative arrangements) as well as supporting the organizer of the logistics and timetabling who was assigned to work on Quality Indicator 3 (quality management systems). The member accountable for student welfare was assigned to work on Quality Indicator 1 (learner support); the two members accountable for professional development were assigned to Indicator 2 (resources and environment); and one member accountable for the coordination of the academic affairs at EPS was assigned Indicator 5 (assessment and verification). The coordinators of academic affairs and testing from the Modern Languages Division were supporting the members working on Indicators 1, 2 and 5 in the documentation process.

By the time of the inspection visit in June 2013, the Board members had formulated and/or organized the policy and process documents and compiled concrete evidence to illustrate the realization of a body of processes at EPS in line with their assigned quality indicator. To this end, five categories of files, each corresponding to the

respective quality indicators of Pearson Edexcel, had been prepared. Each file was accompanied by a briefing document which summarised the processes taking place at the school or being reviewed at that stage.

During this stage, the FLEPS Leadership and the Advisory Board were also in close contact with one of the regional representatives of Pearson Edexcel Assured who was acting as an external consultant. The consultant held meetings with the students, the academic staff, the Advisory Board members and the Leadership, and briefed them about the Pearson Edexcel Quality Indicators and the Edexcel verification process in general. The Advisory Board members also held an update meeting with the EPS academic staff to address further queries.

In June 2013, the school went through the verification procedure (i.e., site visit) which lasted one day and was conducted by one verifier (i.e., inspector or auditor) assigned by the main office of Pearson Edexcel Assured. During this stage, the verifier examined the school premises, conducted informal interviews with the staff and the students, and was briefed on each group of files by the Advisory Board members. In the end, he provided oral feedback to the director of the school, the assistant director and the consultant. Two weeks later the first cycle of the process was completed when the FLEPS administration received a letter from Pearson Edexcel informing EPS that it had been awarded a seal of approval by this quality assurance agency. Approximately a year later, in May 2014, the school went through its second external audit with another verifier. As a result, it received a

comprehensive report mainly describing the school as an exemplar of ‘good practice’.

When the EPS experience of the accreditation process so far is considered in the light of the definition provided by Hedmo (2002, as cited in Lejeune, 2011), two complementary lines of reasoning emerge. First of all, if the ‘recognition’ aspect described by Hedmo (2002, as cited in Lejeune, 2011) is considered, then the ‘external’ quality assurance characteristic of the process and therefore, the summative nature of the experience are underlined. In this respect, it can be said that EPS has been through an evaluation or even a ‘test’ (Ezer & Horin, 2013) conducted by an inspector assigned by Pearson Edexcel Assured quality assurance agency. As a result of this evaluation the school has been granted a seal of approval. With this seal, the school is regarded as “quality assured” and thus, it can provide the reassurance of the quality of its management of learning and teaching practices to the public.

However, if the institutional “self-study and evaluation” feature described by Hedmo (2002, as cited in Lejeune, 2011) is considered, then the ‘internal’ quality assessment aspect of the process is emphasized. This, in turn, enables the experience to be ascribed a developmental value. In fact, in the literature it has been maintained that especially when an external quality assurance process is based on an academic audit method (Dill, 2000; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Haakstad, 2001), and especially when it incorporates a genuinely critical institutional self-reflection exercise (Dano & Stensaker, 2007; Sarrico, Rosa, Teixeira & Cardoso, 2010; Thomas, 2003), it can be

associated with the practice of continuous institutional quality assurance and improvement (Ezer & Horin, 2013; Lejeune, 2011). This, in turn, makes it possible to link the process with concepts of ‘transformation’ (Gynnild, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Tam, 2001), the development of an ‘internal quality culture’ (Dano & Stensaker, 2007; Harvey, 2005), and ‘learning organizations’ (Dill, 1999; Ehlers, 2009; Tam, 1999).

In particular, according to Garvin’s (1993) concept of a “learning organization” sustainable improvement of quality within an organization is facilitated by its design (p. 81). In this regard, Garvin (1993) defined a “learning organization” as

an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights (p. 80).

According to Garvin (1993), it is the realization of certain managerial practices and organizational processes such as systematic problem solving and experimentation which facilitate learning and promote change and innovation in an organization (p. 81). In a similar vein, Goh (2003) maintains that

- clarity of mission and vision,
- shared leadership and involvement,
- experimentation and rewards,
- effective transfer of knowledge, and
- teamwork and group problem solving

constitute the “building blocks of a learning organization” (pp. 217-218) and therefore provide the framework which ascertain the realization of certain strategic

processes that are vital for “achieving learning capability in an organization” (p. 218).

When the Pearson Edexcel quality assurance experience of EPS is considered from this developmental angle, it can be argued that the school is at the very beginning of a demanding and yet, a rewarding venture. Accordingly, research into the extent of the developmental impact of this experience can contribute considerably to the provision of an informed basis for future steps the school might take towards the establishment of itself as a “learning organization” (Garvin, 1993).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As the EMU English Preparatory School’s approval has only recently been ratified, little is known about the degree of the developmental impact the external quality assurance process has had on the school. With this in mind, there was a need to identify how far this external verification process has contributed to the development of certain strategic processes which foster not only the school’s but also the academic staff’s generation, acquisition and transmission of knowledge and, through their adaptation in the light of this knowledge, to further improve the managerial and academic practices at EPS.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The present case study, therefore, aims to describe the perceived impact of the external quality assurance process on the advancement of those developments at EPS which facilitate the establishment and maintenance of the “core building blocks of a

learning organization” (Goh, 1998, p. 16). Based on this framework, the study aims to answer the following questions;

1. How are the core components of a learning organization perceived by the academic staff at EMU EPS?
2. How does the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process impact on the development of these core components in EPS from the perspectives of:
 - a. the Leadership team?
 - b. the teachers who were directly involved in the process (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board)?
 - c. the teachers who were not directly involved in the process?

For this purpose, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from the Leadership, the teachers who were directly involved in the process (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board) and the teachers who were not directly involved in the process. By means of a survey, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the perceived impact of the Pearson Edexcel quality assurance process on the development of the core components of a learning organization is examined.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In the literature, particularly concerning business administration, the notions of quality assurance, management and enhancement as well as learning organizations and organizational learning are extensively discussed and researched from a range of perspectives. However, despite the fact that external quality assurance has become a widely pursued undertaking explicitly linked to the economic, political and social realities of educational institutions, especially as far as the ELT world is concerned,

very little research or discussion regarding the management, enhancement and assurance of the quality of English language learning and teaching as well as the consideration of English language schools as learning organizations can be found in the literature. Even in considering this omission alone, it can be argued that there is a clear need for an in-depth exploration of the perceived impact of external quality assurance on development of the core components of a learning organization in English language schools.

However, and in regard to higher educational institutions, it is possible to find some recent research focusing on these issues. More importantly still, the ongoing research and discussions highlight the need for further focus on the impact of quality assurance on quality enhancement as well as the development of a quality culture in educational institutions.

The present study, therefore, aims to explore the perceived impact of the external quality assurance process on the development of certain strategic processes which nurture not only the school's but also the academic staff's development to further improve the managerial and academic practices at an English language school; EMU EPS. For this reason, it is believed that the study will contribute considerably to the education literature in general and the ELT literature in particular in that it will provide insights into the impact of external quality assurance process on the internal quality management, enhancement and assurance practices from three different perspectives within the context of an English language school. It is also believed that it will make a significant contribution to all stakeholders (of the school) as well as

the school itself by providing through its findings a sound platform from which the school can further advance its learning capacity and thus, lay the foundations for the establishment of itself as a “learning organization” (Garvin, 1993).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter aims to provide a review of the literature relevant to the scope of the study. To this end, it provides some information as regards the frameworks of quality in education and academic quality management and assurance processes by considering external and internal quality management and assurance practices separately as well as establishing the link between internal quality assurance practices and learning organizations. In the final section of the chapter, the results and implications of some studies as regards the academics' perceptions and attitudes towards academic quality assurance as well as the impact of external quality assurance on the internal quality management and assurance practices are presented.

2.1 Quality as a Multi-Dimensional Concept

In the literature, it is argued that any attempt in defining quality in education, and eventually assessing the extent of the accomplishment of it should consider such factors as (1) the effectiveness of the processes or practices which aid the educational institutions in achieving their mission (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Sarrico, Rosa, Pedro, & Cardoso, 2010; Woodhouse, 1999), (2) different stakeholders' perceptions of what necessitates the accomplishment of these practices (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Harvey & Green, 1993; Sarrico, Rosa, Pedro, & Cardoso, 2010; Tam, 2001; Thomas, 2003), and (3) social, political and economic situations that have impact on these practices

and on the views of the stakeholders (Harvey & Williams, 2010; Thomas, 2003). Accordingly, it is maintained that there is not 'a' definition of quality in education but 'definitions' which project quality as a holistic or a "multi-dimensional" phenomenon (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Ehlers, 2009; Sarrico, Rosa, Pedro, & Cardoso, 2010).

Based on this, some scholars provide frameworks or models of quality in order to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of quality in education and to provide insights into academic quality management and assurance practices. Capturing five different but interrelated conceptualizations of quality in the education literature, Harvey and Green (1993), for example, provide a framework where quality is defined as 'excellence' (i.e., as something that is inherent and distinctive), 'consistency or perfection' (i.e., as 'zero defects' or flawless implementation of processes and internalization of these processes), 'fitness for purpose' (i.e., as the competency of an educational institution in achieving its purpose), 'value for money' (i.e., as something that can be measured against the extent to which the outputs meet the inputs), and 'transformation' (i.e., as a qualitative change which involves empowering learners and democratization of the processes).

Similarly, Cheng and Tam (1997) provide seven models of quality in education. These are 'the goals and specifications model' (i.e., the school's achievement of its stated goals and compliance to common standards, measures or specifications), 'the resources input model' (i.e., the natural result of high quality resources and inputs [e.g. students, staff, facilities and equipment]), 'the processes model' (i.e., smooth

implementation of management, teaching and learning processes and productive learning experiences), ‘the satisfaction model’ (the extent to which the performance of an education institution can satisfy the needs and expectations of its stakeholders [e.g., students, teachers, parents]), ‘the legitimacy model’ (i.e., the survival of an education institution in a competitive environment and its achievement of a legitimate position or reputation), ‘the absence of problem model’ (i.e., absence of defects or flaws), and ‘the organizational learning model’ (i.e., a dynamic phenomenon which leads to continuous improvement and development of participants, practices, processes, and outcomes of an education institution). In a manner of summarizing these models, more recently, quality in education is considered as something which is a part of organizational culture as a whole, and which is achieved as a result of a coherent interplay of organizational processes calibrated towards ongoing improvement (Ehlers, 2009).

When these models or definitions of quality in education are considered holistically, it can be said that such notions as ‘effectiveness’, ‘commitment to innovation and improvement’ and ‘accountability’, which are highly linked to the educational quality management, enhancement and assurance practices, make up the essence of quality in education. Also, it can be argued that “quality initiatives in education require both internal and external procedures” (Ezer & Horin, 2013, p. 249). However still, a closer look into each of these concepts which lie at the heart of quality in education, opens the door to a world of paradoxes (Ng, 2008) or a site of power struggle (Harvey, 2004; Tam, 2001) in which by its nature quality is both an emergent and a prescribed phenomenon (Ehlers, 2009; Ng, 2008; Tam, 2001). It is a

natural part of organizational culture, and yet, its achievement depends on certain interventions on organizational processes. These processes are subject to evaluation against a pre-defined set of criteria (i.e., they are standardized and measurable), and still, they are calibrated towards an ongoing improvement and change. It is mainly for this reason that in the literature it is possible to encounter such arguments on quality management and assurance practices in (language) education whose main concern is whether quality assurance practices stimulate improvement, empowerment, innovation and change rather than standardization, managerialism and compliance (Dano & Stansaker, 2007; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Harvey, 2004; Lejeune, 2011; Newton, 2000; Ng, 2008).

2.2 Academic Quality Assurance

Transferred to education contexts in general and language education contexts in particular from the field of industry, academic quality management and assurance practices are based on the principles of total quality management (TQM) (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Heyworth, 1998, 2013). In this respect, aligned with the holistic stance to quality in education, the total educational quality management is considered as a strategic phenomenon whose main focus is the maintenance and sustainability of effectiveness, productivity as well as the improvement of management, learning and teaching processes at educational institutions (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Ehlers, 2009; Heyworth, 2013). Similarly, the term academic quality assurance is used generically to refer to the collection of policies, procedures, attitudes and actions through which the education institutions ensure the maintenance of the quality and standards of

education they provide as well as their legitimacy (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Harman, 1998 cited in Ezer & Horin, 2013; Woodhouse, 1999).

In line with this, in the literature it is also highlighted that there is a distinction between external and internal academic quality assurance (Dano & Stensaker, 2007; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Gynnild, 2007). In this respect, external quality assurance is maintained to be a retrospective mechanism by means of which an education institution's management of teaching and learning processes (in some cases in serious detail and in some cases in less detail) are evaluated against a set of pre-defined standards.

Internal quality assurance, on the other hand, is considered to be a prospective and needs-based process which incorporates institutional policies and practices (Dill & Beerkens, 2010, cited in Ezer & Horin, 2013). Based on this, it is argued that the former is linked with the notion of external control while the latter is associated with continuous, developmental and transformative perspectives to quality (Dill, 1999; Harvey, 2004). Consequently, the main concerns as regards these two distinct quality assurance practices are focused on whether or not they complement each other, or more specifically, whether the values they incorporate or the motives behind their adoption are compatible in order for external quality assurance processes to have impact on continuous institutional quality enhancement and transformation processes (Dano & Stansaker, 2007; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Gynnild, 2007; Tam 2001).

2.3 External Academic Quality Assurance

External quality assurance is maintained to be a retrospective process which is run either by a government body or a private quality assurance agency (Heyworth, 1998). However, according to many scholars (Cardoso, Rosa, & Santos, 2013; Dano & Stansaker, 2007; Haakstad, 2001; Harvey, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Heyworth, 2013; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012; Thomas, 2003) it has become prevalent in the field of language education as well as higher education for economic and socio-political reasons. In this respect, owing to the fact that external or international quality assurance guarantees the learners' access to education (including language education, too) which meets agreed quality standards, socio-politically it is considered to cater for the public demand for accountability, and thus, promote public confidence in education institutions (Cardoso, Rosa, & Santos, 2013; Harvey, 2004, 2005; Heyworth, 2013; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012; Thomas, 2003) or, as in Europe's case, it is believed to promote harmonisation and student mobility (Dano & Stansaker, 2007; Haakstad, 2001). In line with this, certification and legitimacy gained through international / external quality assurance is also believed to be economically rewarding since it attracts more students which, in turn, leads to an increase in funding especially for private language schools whose main source of income is student fees (Thomas, 2003).

The main point of the accountability perspective to academic quality assurance processes, however, is to hold (language) education institutions responsible for and to ensure their sensitivity to stakeholders' needs in accordance with a set of pre-defined quality standards. For this reason, in the literature, it is maintained that

through the quality standards or indicators against which quality assurance agencies monitor and evaluate the quality of the services provided by the education institutions (Biggs, 2001, as cited in Ezer & Horin, 2013), external quality assurance has a benchmarking focus (Heyworth, 2013; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012).

To this end, quality standards are maintained to be formulated generically in accordance with the concerns regarding what quality in education entails, the interests and expectations of the stakeholders, and the management strategies which are adopted to achieve quality within a particular context (Cheng & Tam, 1997). Also, it is pointed out that these pre-defined quality standards are considered with respect to the institutions' definition and achievement of their mission and objectives (Dill, 2000; Tam, 2001; Woodhouse, 1999), and they may concentrate on inputs, processes or outputs or a combination of these dimensions involved in academic quality management and assurance processes (Harvey, 2004). In other words, from the accountability and benchmarking perspectives, external quality assurance agencies monitor and assess the effectiveness of the educational organizations in delivering what they claim to be delivering against the pre-defined and commonly agreed quality standards (Heyworth, 1998; Thomas, 2003).

2.3.1 Approaches to External Academic Quality Assurance: Academic Audit, Programme Assessment and Accreditation

In the literature, it is stated that in their monitoring and assessment schemes, external quality assurance agencies may adopt one or a combination of different approaches or methods. These approaches are broadly listed as 'academic audit or review',

‘subject or programme assessment’ and ‘accreditation’ (Dill, 2000; Harvey, 2004; Tam, 2001; Woodhouse, 1999).

As an external quality assurance mechanism, academic audit verifies an educational institution’s internal quality management and assurance processes which are strategically deployed to achieve its mission and explicitly defined objectives by considering their alignment with the pre-defined standards (Dill, 2000; Tam, 2001; Woodhouse, 1999). Academic audits do not aim to comprehensively review the institutions’ resources or activities. That is, they do not directly evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but rather focus on the ‘effectiveness of the internal quality management and assurance processes’, and they result in description (Dill, 2000; Ezer & Horin, 2013; Woodhouse, 1999). In short, audits focus on the “quality work” (Dill, 2000, p.188) and examine:

- the suitability of the planned quality procedures as regards the stated objectives,
- the correspondence of the quality activities with the plans, and
- the effectiveness of the quality activities in achieving the objectives (Woodhouse, 1999).

The second approach, subject or programme assessment, also refers to an external verification and validation process. However, it focuses on the “quality of delivered performance” (Dill, 2000, p. 187) of the institutions in achieving their missions (Tam, 2001), and therefore, it emphasizes the effectiveness of the realization of the processes involved in the institutions’ achievement of their quality initiatives against

the pre-defined standards (Woodhouse, 1999). For this reason, subject or programme assessment makes graded or quantitative judgements rather than resulting in descriptions (Dill, 2000; Tam, 2001; Woodhouse, 1999).

The third approach, accreditation, also called “licensing” or “registration” (Woodhouse, 1999, p. 33), is a ‘comprehensive’ evaluation process of whether institutions meet the minimum requirements of the pre-defined standards (Dill, 2000; Thomas, 2003; Harvey, 2004, 2008). As a result of the evaluation, if the schools or programmes are found to have passed the threshold level, they are granted a seal of approval (Harvey, 2004; Lejeune, 2011; Thomas, 2003). This seal assures the public that the education institutions have efficient quality management practices (Harvey, 2008; O’Mahony & Garavan, 2012). Table 2.1 summarises the foci and outputs of different approaches to external quality assurance schemes.

Table 2.1: The foci and outputs of different approaches to external quality assurance schemes

| Activity | Process | Output |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Audit | Are your processes effective? | Description – determines the validity of the claims made by the institutions |
| Assessment | How good are you? | Grade –may include pass or fail |
| Accreditation | Are you good enough (in various ways) to be approved? Are you fit to be approved? | Pass/fail or Yes/no decision – gradations such as towards or away from pass are possible |

Source: Woodhouse, 1999, p. 33.

At this stage it has to be noted that, in the related literature, it is also highlighted that these approaches to external quality assurance (i.e., academic audit, program assessment and accreditation) do not necessarily need to be considered per se because they overlap in terms of the procedures they follow (Haakstad, 2001; Harvey, 2004; Woodhouse, 1999). That is, an audit can turn into an assessment if the result is graded or to an accreditation if the outcome results in a pass or fail judgement (Woodhouse, 1999). Therefore, one or more of these approaches can be adopted at a time by an external quality assurance agency (Woodhouse, 1999) because they all aim to align educational organizations' internal quality management and assurance systems to an external quality assurance scheme by means of the pre-defined quality standards.

2.3.2 External Academic Quality Assurance: The Scheme

Based on the insight provided above it can, therefore, be said that, irrespective of the approach adopted by the quality assurance agencies, the whole point of external quality assurance schemes is to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the internal quality management and assurance processes of educational organizations. In this respect, in order to ensure the adoption of pre-defined quality management framework, and hence, transparency of the education institutions, external quality assurance schemes systematically apply the principle of 'data-based decision making' by involving such procedures as demanding institutional self-study and provision of documentary evidence from the education institutions, as well as conducting site visits, and follow-up (Dano & Stansaker 2007; Harvey, 2004; Heyworth, 2013).

For the institutional self-study (also called self-evaluation, self-review or self-assessment), the external quality assurance agencies provide their quality criteria to the education institutions mostly in the form of the checklists, and demand a self-study report from them prior to the site visit (Heyworth, 2013). During the site visit, the agencies check if the institutions are doing what they claim to be doing in their reports. Thus, the self-study report along with other evidence constitutes the data which external quality assurance agencies base their decisions on. This provides the ‘legitimacy’ strand of external quality assurance schemes. Furthermore, due the fact that the self-study is based on the pre-defined quality standards, the standards or indicators, by means of which quality assurance agencies monitor and evaluate the education institutions, also become a part of the internal quality assurance system as the standards to be ascribed for, and this provides the ‘benchmarking’ strand of the external quality assurance schemes.

Another key element which represents data for external quality assurance agencies’ verification process is a considerable amount of documentation provided by the educational institutions as the evidence for their actualization of the quality indicators (Heyworth, 2013; Harvey, 2004, 2005). During the site visit the auditors (also called inspectors or verifiers) appointed by the quality assurance agencies examine these documentary evidence as well as the school premises, and hold interviews with the students and teachers in order to validate the schools’ claims as regards the degree of effectiveness of their organizational processes against the pre-defined standards (Heyworth, 2013; Harvey, 2004, 2005).

The data-collection and verification process conducted by external quality assurance agencies also involves class observations. However, as highlighted by Heyworth (2013), some inspection schemes rely more on documentary evidence than the observation of the actual teaching and learning activities in class. Most site visits finish with a feedback session where the auditors summarise their findings to the institution's management (Heyworth, 2013). Following the site visit, the quality assurance agencies present the results of their review or assessment to the institutions in a written report form (Heyworth, 2013).

External quality assurance schemes do not conclude with the publication of the assessment report nor do they conclude with the institutions' having been granted a quality seal. They are ongoing processes, and involve follow-up activities which mainly focus on the compensation of the identified gaps in accordance with the pre-defined quality management framework (i.e., standards), as well as monitoring of the continuity in an educational institution's quality management and assurance system (Dill, 2000; Lejeune, 2011). For this reason, the quality assured status granted by the external quality assurance agencies is subject to a regular revision process at certain intervals which range in accordance with the external quality assurance agencies' own policies (Lejeune, 2011).

2.4 Internal Academic Quality Assurance

As revealed by the literature considerations so far, academic quality management and assurance practice is, in fact, something to be maintained and sustained internally because the main function of external quality assurance schemes is to validate an already existing system and/or provide insights into the areas which need further

development in accordance with a pre-defined quality management framework (Heyworth, 1998, 2013). For this reason, external quality assurance can also be stood for a benchmarking procedure embedded in the internal quality management and assurance systems of educational institutions (Heyworth, 2013; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012).

When the literature concerning the total academic quality management and assurance practices is considered from this perspective, it is seen that, in total quality management, there is a focus on both “the techniques employed to establish quality” and “the people who have to carry them out” (Heyworth, 1998, p. 6). In line with this, a quality assurance system is mainly based on the principle that “everyone in an organization has a responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the product or service” (Tam, 2001, p. 49). For this reason, the primary focus of internal academic quality management and assurance practices is argued to be the development of shared values (i.e., quality culture) in a (language) education organization. This is maintained to be facilitated by certain organizational design elements or managerial and structural interventions which promote a coherent and systematic combination of bottom-up and top-down processes (Ehlers, 2009; Heyworth, 2013; Muresan et al., 2007). More specifically, a systematic approach to quality enhancement and management which is marked by a strong leadership commitment, involvement of staff, teamwork, and ownership for individual development (i.e., empowerment) plays a crucial part in the development of quality culture where the individuals who are involved in the organizational processes are committed to continuous improvement, innovation and change (Ehlers, 2009;

Heyworth, 2013; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012; Tam, 1999). Consequently, internal quality management and assurance practices in (language) education institutions are considered to be systematic, prospective and developmental, and this in turn, provides the grounds for these practices to be associated with the notion of learning organizations (Brown & Heyworth, 1999; Dill, 1999; Ehlers, 2009; Pickering, 1999; Tam, 1999; Underhill, 2004).

2.4.1 Internal Academic Quality Assurance and Learning Organizations

Regarding the notion of a learning organization, it is possible to find various definitions in the literature. In some cases, these definitions characterize the notion as a 'collective learning atmosphere' in which learning or development is considered to be an inherent feature of an organization, and in some others, they signify tangible and systematic organizational and managerial practices which are believed to maximize learning or development of the individuals and hence, the organization (Örtenblad, 2007). In this respect, as one of the most prominent scholars associated with the concept, Senge (1992, cited in Garvin, 1993), for example, describes a learning organization as a place

where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (p. 78).

Putting emphasis on managerial and organizational strategies which yield tangible, data-based and measureable results, Garvin (1993), on the other hand, defines a learning organization as

[a]n organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights (p. 80).

Highlighting the facilitative role of the organizational processes in individuals' learning and development as well as the inherent and dynamic nature of change and innovation in organizations, Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell (1991, cited in Garavan 1997), also describe a learning organization as an entity "which facilitates the learning of all of its members and continuously transforms itself" (p. 25).

In short, despite showing some differences, almost all the definitions of the concept commonly indicate an organization which continuously and systematically develops, innovates and changes along with the commitment, development and transformation of its people. For this reason, a learning organization can be described as an umbrella term attained to describe the collection of the features or an end result of the internal academic quality management and assurance practices described previously (Dill, 1999).

At this stage, however, it needs to be highlighted that regarding the study of learning organizations, in some cases the focus of research is more theory-oriented and focuses on the discovery of the elements which facilitate the individuals' learning and transformation in an organization and thus, the 'emergent' nature of change. In other cases, however, it is more action-oriented and focuses on the 'design' elements or strategic interventions which are believed to foster individuals' commitment to learning which consequently, leads to an organization's development or transformation (Dill, 1999; Goh, 2003; Shipton, 2006). In this way, while some scholars differentiate the notions of organizational learning and learning organizations, others prefer to use the term 'learning organizations' generically, and

say that the concept mainly incorporates two main approaches: a descriptive and a normative approach (Garavan, 1997; Goh, 2003).

A descriptive approach to a learning organization focuses on the emergent nature of organizational learning, and views 'learning' as a neutral phenomenon (Goh, 2003). According to the scholars who hold a descriptive stance to learning organizations, all organizations learn in time and the notion of a learning organization represents 'an ideal state' or 'an ethos' they aspire to establish (Garavan, 1997). Accordingly, the research conducted from this perspective is concentrated more on the individuals, and aims to discover 'how learning occurs' in organizations or the elements which facilitate learning (Dill, 1999; Goh, 2003).

In a normative approach, on the other hand, not defying the necessity of 'cultural' or 'inherent' features, the scholars who hold a normative stance argue that certain strategic managerial and organizational processes facilitate the establishment of a collective learning atmosphere, and thus, promote dynamicity, change and efficiency in and of organizations (Garavan, 1997; Goh, 2003). As a result, the research conducted from a normative perspective focuses on the diagnosis of the present situation in organizations with respect to these strategic managerial and organizational processes in order to assist organizations in their development of effective management strategies (Goh, 2003). For this reason, this approach is more closely linked to total academic quality management practices, and is considered to have a strong managerial perspective because it puts great emphasis on the role of

the leadership in creating the conditions for sustainable development and in promoting individuals' commitment to learning, innovation and change (Goh, 2003).

2.4.2 Features of Internal Academic Quality Assurance Practices and Learning Organizations

Several scholars whose names are associated with the notion of learning organizations provide frameworks which characterize the conditions that are maintained to foster individuals' learning, and hence, that have impact on their collective actions and the development of an organization. In this respect, particularly, the frameworks provided by Senge (1990, cited in Pickering, 1999), Garvin (1993), and Goh (2003) provide insights into the effective application of quality management and assurance practices in educational institutions.

First of all, focusing on the notion of a learning organization particularly from individuals' commitment and empowerment perspective, Senge's framework (1990, cited in Pickering, 1999) provides five elements which are necessary for the establishment of a learning organization. These are:

- 'personal mastery' (i.e., self-initiated professional development as well as an organizational context which encourages individuals to act on their personally identified development areas),
- 'mental models' (i.e., being self-reflective and critically assessing ones' underlying assumptions that shape their actions),

- ‘shared vision’ (i.e., an organizational context which facilitates both the management and the staff’s commitment to the future goals of the organization),
- ‘team learning’ (i.e., collectively acting on the identified problems and exploring current good practices or paradigms for the solutions), and
- ‘systems thinking’ (i.e., seeing the interrelatedness and totality of the actions involved in processes or of the four elements identified above).

When considered in academic contexts, Senge’s elements are also referred to as “cultural facets” of a learning organization (Armstrong & Foley, 2003, p. 75) because his framework displays the features of organizational culture in which continuous learning and development of the organization is collectively and inherently reflected by the activities of the individuals and thus, is a result of shared values, attitudes and behaviours (Armstrong & Foley, 2003; Garavan, 1997).

Different from Senge’s framework, Garvin’s (1993) framework of a learning organization, however, adopts an action-oriented approach and hence, focuses on strategically deployed managerial and organizational processes. Accordingly, the framework signifies five fundamental activities which characterize the strategies that facilitate the learning or development of the individuals and so, of the organizations.

These are:

- ‘systematic problem solving’ (i.e., continuous and systematic monitoring of the organizational processes, basing improvement-oriented decisions on

observations and data, and taking actions on analytical-skill-development of individuals),

- ‘learning from own experiences and past history’ (i.e., implementing continuous and systematic institutional self-reviews which identify successes and opportunities for learning based on failures),
- ‘learning from the experiences and best practices of others’ (i.e., exploring good practices implemented elsewhere and benchmarking),
- ‘experimentation with new approaches’ (i.e., trying new ideas through projects), and
- ‘transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization’ (i.e., sharing knowledge with and having other groups in the organization learn it).

Consequently, Garvin’s (1993) framework underlines particularly the necessity of organizations’ adoption of a systems approach to their change and quality management processes. In the literature concerning academic quality management and assurance practices, a systems approach is also referred to as a quality management strategy which involves a string of systematic practices called input, process, output, and feedback loop from output to input (Cheng & Tam, 1997). This systematic process is maintained to be realized in a continuous cycle of operations which includes four phases: “Plan, Do, Study and Apply” (PDSA) (Deming, 1986 cited in Heyworth, 2013, p. 282). Figure 2.1 depicts the operations involved in the PDSA cycle.

In this cycle, ‘input’ constitutes the needs, expectations, values and standards driven from both the external and internal environments and stakeholders, and therefore during the planning stage, the developmental goals or the quality initiatives are formulated in accordance with these inputs. Consequently, identification of ‘good practice’ and measures against which the implementation and achievement of the quality initiatives can be assessed constitute a particular feature of the planning stage (Heyworth, 2013).

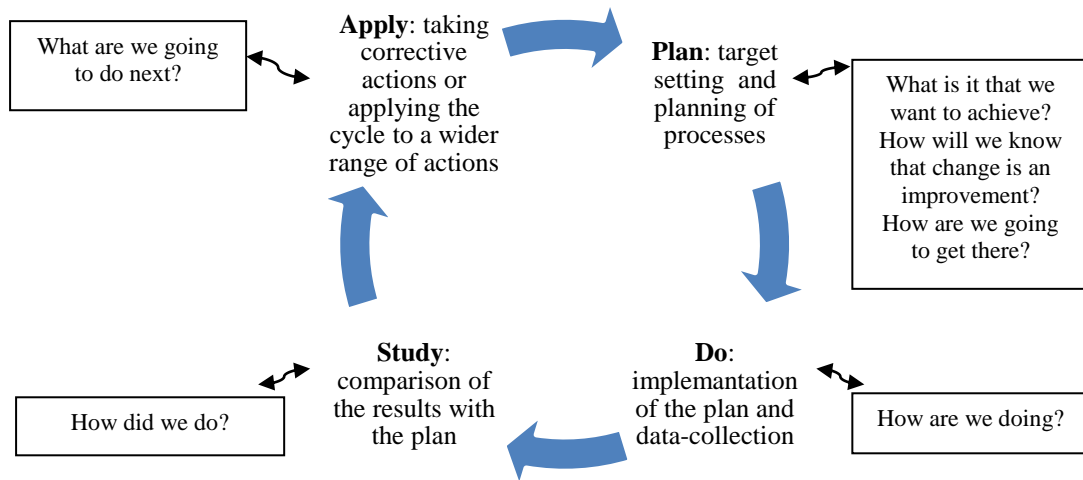


Figure 2.1: The processes involved in the PDSA cycle

The ‘do’ stage reflects the implementation and monitoring of the quality initiatives as well as data-collection. Accordingly, the ‘study’ stage involves the analysis of the gathered data in accordance with the identified measures. The outcome of this analysis shows the degree of the institution’s achievement of its quality initiatives. Through feedback loop from outcome to input, a new PDSA cycle which focuses on either compensation of the diagnosed gaps or the application of the quality initiative on a wider scale is initiated (Cheng & Tam, 1997). Therefore, by placing a ‘needs-

driven’ and ‘data-based’ decision making as the focal concern of quality management and assurance processes, the main point of a systems approach is to ensure continuity in an institution’s sensitivity to its internal and external environments as well as its learning from its mistakes and development (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Heyworth, 2013; O’Mahony & Garavan, 2012).

Finally, having a lot of features in common with both Garvin (1993) and Senge’s (1990) frameworks, in Goh’s (2003) framework of a learning organization there are five core strategic processes which are maintained to be vital for “achieving learning capability in an organization” (p. 218). These are:

- ‘clarity of mission and vision’ (i.e., clear articulation and common understanding of an organization’s vision and mission and how each individual’s work contributes to the realization of them, and managerial practices and organizational structures which foster individuals’ commitment to them),
- ‘shared leadership and involvement’ (i.e., the leadership’s commitment to staff empowerment, risk-taking and experimentation, and involvement in decision-making, facilitative learning environment, and non-hierarchical / flat management)
- ‘experimentation and rewards’ (i.e., organizational context which encourages self-reflection and risk-taking and rewards them),
- ‘effective transfer of knowledge’ (i.e., clear and fast communication based on identified problems and opportunities for the solution of them among the

units of the organization and identification of ‘good practice’ from external environments and benchmarking),

- ‘teamwork and group problem solving (i.e., collective problem-solving)

According to Goh (1998), these processes are also supplemented by two supporting foundations which are ‘effective organizational structure or design’ (i.e., decentralized organizational structure with minimal bureaucratic procedures) and ‘skill and competency building of individuals through hands-on experience’ (i.e., experiential learning, and development of analytical-skills of individuals).

In sum, in a manner of synthesizing Senge (1990, cited in Pickering, 1999) and Garvin’s (1993) frameworks, Goh (2003, 1998) also emphasizes the vitality of a systems approach as well as the individuals’ role in the effective application of it. Different from Senge, however, Goh (2003, 1998) clearly attaches a big portion of responsibility to managerial practices and organizational structures for facilitating individuals’ self-initiated professional development as well as their understanding of the rationale of the organization’s developmental goals and alignment of their self-development goals with the goals of the institution. According to Goh (2003), as a result of this interconnected process, individuals collectively claim the ownership of and commit to the values and developmental goals of an organization.

Similar to Goh’s way of framing a learning organization, in educational literature on quality management, the role of leadership as ‘change agents’ in having the academics become ‘change agents’ themselves is highlighted as well (Ehlers, 2009;

Tam, 1999). Linking this complex phenomenon to ‘transformational’ nature of quality, Tam (1999), for example, argues that leaderships’ commitment to academics’ empowerment is what lies at the heart of learner-centred practice as when academics themselves are agents of change they can transfer these qualities on their learners and facilitate their becoming active practitioners of critical thinking and commitment to continuous / life-long learning as well. Considering this chain reaction more on the organizational level, Ehlers (2009) also points out to the role of managerial practices and organizational structures in facilitating individuals’ empowerment and commitment to reflective practice aligned with the goals of the institution. According to Ehlers (2009), this leads to a coherent interplay of top-down and bottom-up practices, which, in turn, fosters the establishment of organization-wide shared values and quality culture.

2.4.3 Features of Internal Academic Quality Assurance and English Language Schools

In the literature it is also possible to find some scholarly discussions which draw parallels between the features of internal academic quality assurance practices outlined in the previous section and some curricular and managerial applications in English language schools. In this respect, from the perspective of a systems approach, some scholars (Heyworth, 1998, 2013; Muresan et al., 2007), for example, outline the foundations of quality management and assurance practices in language schools as:

- the formulation of the mission statements,
- transferring the goals identified in the mission statements into strategic plans,

- identification of measures to guide the monitoring and data-gathering processes as regards the implementation of the plans (i.e., benchmarking),
- conducting continuous institutional self-reviews, and
- re-planning and taking further steps such as external audits in order to address the institutional needs which are identified as a result of self-reviews.

Furthermore, especially when the focus of academic quality management and assurance cycle is narrowed down to the effectiveness of the basic organizational processes in language schools which are, naturally, learning, teaching and assessment practices, the input, process, output and feedback loop cycle is maintained to involve the consideration of such issues as:

- a coherent and systematic sequencing from curriculum to syllabus, to the planning of weekly schemes of work and to individual lessons,
- a coherent, systematic, valid and reliable assessment processes, and
- performance and continuous professional development of teachers (Heyworth, 2013).

This insight, in turn, provides the grounds for such descriptive frameworks as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as well as EAQUALS Framework for Teacher Training and Development to be referred to as guidelines or measures of good practice which inform planning, doing and reviewing of learning, teaching and assessment practices (Brown & Heyworth, 1999; Heyworth, 1998, 2013).

More importantly, however, as regards the features of internal quality management processes which highlight a coherent integration of bottom-up and top-down practices, in ELT literature, particularly concerning the discussions on curriculum design and change management there is an emphasis on the adoption of a combination of rational-empirical (i.e., explaining and justifying the necessity of change) and normative-re-educative (i.e., problem-solving driven by bottom-up pressure) approaches to change management as well as the role of teachers' readiness for and commitment to change for the effective application of these change management strategies (Marsh, 2004; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Accordingly, some scholars who adopt an action-oriented perspective emphasize the creation of the conditions which facilitate teachers' commitment to change and continuous professional development (CPD). In this way, they highlight the role of reflective practice, action research and different forms of observations (including peer observations) as well as performance management / appraisals which not only encourage teachers' commitment to CPD but also facilitate teachers' involvement in decision making processes as well as institutions' identification of their developmental needs particularly as regards what goes on in the classroom (Heyworth, 2013; Muresan, 2009; Muresan et al., 2007; Pickering, 1999; Underhill, 2004).

2.5 Internal and External Academic Quality Assurance: Related Studies

In the literature it is also possible to find an array of studies which aim to find out the academics' perceptions of quality assurance as well as to address the concerns about the degree of compatibility of external and internal quality assurance practices and the impact of external quality assurance processes on the development of internal educational quality management and assurance systems. Despite the fact that in some cases they indicate contradictory results, these studies not only provide further insights into the complexities involved in academic quality assurance practices but also open a door to a variety of possibilities of further exploration.

The studies which focus on academics' attitudes towards quality assurance practices are mainly based on the premise that without academics' support and engagement, it is not possible to implement the quality management and assurance practices successfully (Cardoso, Rosa & Santos, 2013; Newton, 2000; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012). In this respect, however, while the results of some studies indicate positive perceptions, some others indicate negative attitudes of academics towards quality assurance. Yet again, in both cases, the implications of the studies are pointed towards the need for academics' involvement in the quality assurance processes as well as the quality assurance schemes' reflection of the values compatible with the values of academics. For example, in a quantitative study on Portuguese academics' perceptions of the goals and purposes of the external quality assurance practices in higher education sector, Cardoso, Rosa and Santos (2013) found that academics

tended to be more supportive of external quality assurance schemes which they perceived to be improvement rather than control-oriented. Cardoso, Rosa and Santos (2013) also found that the amount of experience academics had in quality assurance practices had some impact on their attitudes as well. That is, the academics who were more involved in these practices had more positive attitudes towards the academic quality assurance.

Similarly, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data by means of a survey from Portuguese university rectors and academics as regards their perceptions of external quality assurance practices' contributions to institutional development, Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006) reported rectors' positive opinions as regards the impact of external quality assurance on particularly the development of a strategic approach to internal quality management and assurance practices at universities. However, Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006) also observed that there were some differences in rectors and academics' perspectives in that while the rectors considered the contributions of external quality assurance more from the angle of management and decision making processes, the academics were more concentrated on teaching, learning, and research processes.

As regards the degree of external quality assurance processes' addressing the quality-enhancement-oriented expectations of academics, it is also possible to find studies in the literature whose findings indicate academics' negative perceptions especially regarding the impact of external quality assurance on the enhancement of learning and teaching processes. In this respect, focusing on the goals and applications

involved in external quality assurance schemes, three studies; a single-site qualitative case study conducted at NewColl college by Newton (2000), a qualitative on-line study conducted with fifty-three academics and administrators with some accreditation experience from five different countries by Harvey (2004), and a retrospective document analysis study conducted by Harvey (2005) indicate similar findings. In contrast to the findings of Cardoso, Rosa and Santos (2013) and Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006), as a result of these studies Newton (2000) and Harvey (2004, 2005) found that external quality assurance was perceived to be a procedure adopted only to meet the accountability and legitimacy needs of educational institutions rather than being a contributing factor in their quality-enhancement initiatives. Holding a critical stance to the applications involved in external quality assurance schemes, both Newton (2000) and Harvey (2004, 2005) observed that the fact that the structuring and goals of the evaluation processes mainly focused on verification and flaw finding, external quality assurance processes were not perceived to be providing opportunities for open, honest and constructive dialogues on pedagogic innovations, and sharing of good practice. Instead, they were perceived to be facilitating a game-playing and ritualistic atmosphere in which the institutions not only over-documented their processes but also produced “tailor made” (Harvey, 2005, p. 271) documents in order to present themselves in the best possible light. This, in turn, led the academics to perceive the external quality assurance processes as pointless, bureaucratic and burdensome control mechanisms whose main concern was the institutions’ conformance to the standards rather than enhancement of the quality of their learning and teaching processes. As a result of this, Newton (2000) and Harvey (2004, 2005) pointed out to the academics’ dissociation of themselves

with external quality assurance processes and adopting conformist behaviours just to meet the requirements, or even showing some resistance rather than truly being committed. This, in turn, led external quality assurance processes to be perceived as an impediment rather than a catalyst for change especially for the institutions where quality-enhancement-oriented, data-based and critical self-reflection and monitoring processes were already practiced internally (Harvey, 2005).

From a slightly different perspective and yet, like Harvey (2004, 2005) and Newton (2000), Gynnild (2007) also took a critical stance towards external quality assurance practices. In a case study on the impact of the first phase of an external quality assurance process at a Norwegian university, Gynnild (2007) concluded that there was a need for the quality criteria to demand institutions to collect data on their learning outcomes systematically and to show evidence of enhanced student learning. According to Gynnild (2007), due to the fact that at present they did not, the goals of the external quality assurance did not match with the aims of educational institutions, and hence, the external quality assurance schemes did not stimulate institutional efforts on enhancement of student learning.

Also focusing on the procedures involved in external quality assurance schemes, Ezer and Horin (2013), Ng (2008) and Lejeune's (2011) findings, however, indicate contrasting results especially with those of Harvey (2004, 2005) and Newton (2000). Focusing on the impact of institutional self-study carried out as a part of external quality assurance process, in a qualitative longitudinal case study conducted with the leading faculty members in a teacher education college in Israel, Ezer and Horin

(2013) observed that in a three-year period of time the leading faculty members' understanding of quality assurance changed from an externally implemented monitoring and "gate-keeper" (p. 253) process into an internally implemented needs, learning and enhancement-oriented ongoing process. In line with this, Ezer and Horin (2013) also found that along with changes towards more learning-and-enhancement-oriented internal quality assurance and management practices came some changes in the management styles of the leading faculty members focusing on shared leadership and involvement rather than a centralized management style. As a result, Ezer and Horin (2013) highlighted the vitality of 'time' element in the development of continuous-quality-development-oriented internal academic quality assurance practices which are facilitated by assertive leadership who attached importance to staff engagement and empowerment.

Similarly, as a result of another longitudinal case study on academic quality assurance in primary and secondary schools in Singapore, Ng (2008) also found that external quality assurance practices had a positive impact on schools' development of their own internal quality review mechanisms. Drawing parallels between quality assurance processes and a paradoxical journey, Ng (2008) concluded that in their quality assurance experiences, the schools went through the phases of "standardization", "local accountability", and eventually "diversity and innovation" (p. 112). In this respect, Ng (2008) observed that at the initial stages, called the "standardization phase", the main concern of quality assurance initiatives of the schools was conformity to standards. At this stage, therefore, quality improvement incentive came only from the external quality assurance agencies, and the

improvement focus was only on the areas which were identified as gaps by the external quality assurance agencies. However, as noted by Ng (2008), in time, the schools came to the realization of the static nature of the standardization phase which, in turn, led them to take the responsibility of their own development and the quality of their processes. Naming this stage as the “local accountability phase”, Ng (2008) observed that at this stage, the role of external quality assurance agencies turned from being the sole initiator of changes into a facilitator guiding the schools towards improvement. Finally, in the last stage, which Ng (2008) called “diversity and innovation phase”, the external quality assurance process became a “stimulation of self-regulation” (p. 116) as the impetus for change mainly came from critical institutional self-evaluation.

As a result of the study, Ng (2008) also found that external quality assurance processes had both positive and negative impacts on the schools. Accordingly, similar to Newton (2000) and Harvey’s (2004, 2005) observations, Ng (2008) observed that particularly when the external quality assurance was perceived as a game to be played in order to keep up the appearances of the schools, it tended to be perceived as a tiresome and bureaucratic control mechanism which, in turn, generated resistance from the staff. As for the positive impacts, Ng (2008) noted that especially when the quality criteria focused on quality improvement and promoted the school leaders’ assuming their role as the key agents of change who facilitated the involvement and empowerment of the staff, external quality assurance processes had an impact on the changes in the way the schools operated.

In another qualitative case study which aimed to find out the impact of an accreditation process on a business school's development of strategizing, changing and branding capabilities, Lejeune (2011) also found that in addition to its motivating and legitimizing effects, the accreditation process had a positive impact on the school's development of enhancement-oriented internal quality management and assurance strategies. These strategies involved the school's formulation of its mission and vision and the leadership's development of management strategies which ensured that these were effectively communicated to the staff, as well as the necessary steps were taken in order to facilitate the staff's commitment to the achievement of them.

In the literature, there are also some studies which adopted an 'inside-out' perspective to the academic quality management and assurance processes and focused on the factors involved in genuinely quality-enhancement-oriented (as opposed to conformance-oriented) quality management and assurance practices. One such study is a case study of quality management practices at an IT division in a university conducted by O'Mahony and Garavan (2012). As a result of their study, O'Mahony and Garavan (2012) identified 'leadership support and commitment to development', 'involvement of stakeholders', and 'a systematic and data-based approach to change management' as the factors which had impact on effective applications of development-oriented quality management systems. Accordingly, similar to Ng's (2008) observation of the role of external quality assurance in the "diversity and innovation phase", O'Mahony and Garavan (2012) also highlighted that when embedded within a systematic internal review system, external quality

assurance acted as a catalyst for change because it reinforced effective implementation of quality management processes which emphasized data-based and systematic decision making.

Also, by means of university case studies drawn from the institute for management in higher education (IMHE) project on the impact of academic quality assessment on institutional management and decision-making, Dill (1999) studied the extent of 12 universities' (from 7 different countries) adoption and implementation of Garvin's (1993) five learning activities (i.e., systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from own experiences and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization) in order to draw conclusions as regards the features of genuinely 'quality-enhancement-oriented' internal quality management and assurance practices. As a result, Dill (1999) concluded that except for the universities which adopted conformance-oriented strategies, the universities with genuine interest in their own development by means of quality assurance practices developed a data-based systematic approach to the management and enhancement of their teaching and learning activities.

As a final note, due to the fact that the present case study aimed to describe the perceived impact of an external quality assurance process on the development of core components of a learning organization as identified by Goh (2003), and because it involved both qualitative and quantitative data from three different groups of internal stakeholders (the Leadership team, directly involved teachers and not directly

involved teachers), it is possible to find an array of similarities between the present study and particularly, the studies which were conducted by Cardoso, Rosa and Santos (2013), Dill (1999), Ezer and Horin (2013), Lejeune (2011), Ng (2008), O'Mahony and Garavan (2012) and Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the research design, the context and the participants of the study. It also presents the data collection tools and procedures, methods of data analysis and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.1 The Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive case study design, and aimed to describe the perceived impact of an external quality assurance process on the development of internal quality management and assurance practices (i.e., the strategic building blocks of a learning organization [Goh, 1998, 2003]) within the specific context of the English Preparatory School at Eastern Mediterranean University.

Yin (2002) describes a case study as:

... an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident ... The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (pp. 13-14).

Based on this description, in order to draw a thorough and unbiased picture of the phenomenon under study, this descriptive case study adopted a triangulation

methodology, that aimed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from three different groups of internal stakeholders (i.e., the Leadership team, teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process, and teachers who were not directly involved in the process) by means of a survey and semi-structured interviews. In line with this, the publicized documentation was also used as supplementary data in order to support the discussions drawn from the data gathered from the participants. Table 3.1 presents the data collection sources and tools used in the study.

Table 3.1: Data sources and tools

| Data Source | Tools |
|--------------------|--|
| Quantitative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Part I |
| Qualitative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Part III • Semi-Structured Interviews • Document Analysis |

3.1.1 Emic and Etic Perspectives

At this stage it has to be stressed that, because the study aimed to draw a thorough and unbiased picture of the perceived impact of the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process on the development of core components of a learning organization at EPS through a range of perspectives and experiences of its “local people” (Kottak, 2006, p. 53), and because the researcher is herself one of the ‘locals’, the study also involved a combination of emic and etic perspectives (Kottak, 2006). That is, as a teacher, the coordinator of the EPS Curricular Team and an Accreditation Advisory Board member, the researcher’s standpoint in this study was that of an insider. As an

insider, she naturally has had her own experiences and held her own views on the phenomenon under study. This standpoint, however, only facilitated her role as an instrument of the study itself.

In sum, the main aim of the study was to provide a description of the perceived impact of an external quality assurance process on the development of core components of a learning organization at EMU EPS from the perspectives of three different groups of internal stakeholders. However, it is hoped that the results will also trigger a wide range of ‘why’ questions for readers and therefore, give impetus for further in-depth studies.

3.2 Context

As part of an international English-medium university, the Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS) mainly caters for the foreign language needs of a diverse body of students with a variety of cultural and social backgrounds. The school (FLEPS) is composed of two divisions: the Modern Languages Division (MLD) and the English Preparatory School (EPS). MLD offers a range of foreign language elective courses as well as English language courses to the students. These courses are a part of the departmental course load of the students, and therefore, MLD is considered to be a service unit which functions within the organizational structure of the departments of the university. The main function of EPS, on the other hand, is to offer intensive and integrated skills English language courses to the EMU students who need to improve their English language proficiency level further before they start studying at their departments. In this respect, EPS is considered to be an English language school with a more centralized structure.

The fact that EPS is an English language school with a more centralized structure than MLD enabled the school to go through the first cycle of the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process separately in the 2012-2013 Spring semester. It is for this reason in particular that the English Preparatory School (EPS) could be considered a unique context in which the case study could be conducted.

3.3 An International Quality Assurance Agency: Pearson Edexcel

Assured

As stated before, a quality assured status or seal gained from an external quality assurance agency provides the reassurance of the (language) education organizations' transparency to stakeholders by means of guaranteed quality standards. One such private international quality assurance agency which conducts external audits and certifies the quality management processes of education or training programmes is Pearson Edexcel Assured (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document).

Pearson Edexcel Assured bases its monitoring and verification scheme on five main quality indicators: 'learner support', 'resources and environment', 'quality management system', 'administrative arrangements', and 'assessment and verification'. These indicators are formulated generically, and they concentrate on the inputs and the processes as regards the quality management practices in an education programme (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document). More specifically, each indicator incorporates a list of measures against which the standard of a particular aspect of the internal quality management practices is certified. Table

3.2 illustrates the scope and the number of measures involved in each Quality Indicator.

Quality Indicator 1 focuses on learner support, and involves five measures regarding the organizational processes involved in addressing the learners' needs as well as the provision of opportunities for the learners' involvement in the learning, assessment and feedback processes in a reciprocal manner. The second Indicator (i.e., resources and environment) is comprised of four measures. Each measure focuses on an aspect of available resources and the environment of the school. These vary from the safety issues to the continuous professional development opportunities provided for the teachers. Quality Indicators 3 and 4 (i.e., quality management system and administrative arrangements) set the benchmarks for a school's academic and administrative quality management cycle. Quality Indicator 3 incorporates eight measures focusing on a range of policies and procedures as regards the implementation, monitoring, review and continuous development of managerial and academic processes including the learning outcomes and assessment methods while Indicator 4 provides the standards for the administrative aspects such as the clarity of roles as displayed by organizational charts, job descriptions as well as record keeping. Finally, Quality Indicator 5 (i.e., assessment and verification) includes seven measures which provide the criteria for the establishment of valid and reliable assessment outcomes.

Table 3.2: The summary of Pearson Edexcel Assured quality indicators

| Edexcel Assured Quality Indicators | Number of Measures | Scope |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| QI 1: Learner Support | 5 | The learners' needs and provision of opportunities for their involvement in the learning, assessment and feedback processes in a reciprocal manner. |
| QI 2: Resources and Environment | 4 | Certain aspects of available resources and the environment of the school including safety issues and professional development opportunities provided for the staff. |
| QI 3: Quality Management System | 8 | The managerial and academic aspects of the input, process and outcome components of a school's quality management cycle. |
| QI 4: Administrative Arrangements | 3 | The administrative aspects of the input, process and outcome components of a school's quality management cycle. |
| QI 5: Assessment and Verification | 7 | The establishment of valid and reliable assessment outcomes by means of assessment and verification processes. |

In its quality assurance scheme, Pearson Edexcel Assured reviews the effectiveness of the education institutions in delivering what they claim to be delivering against these pre-defined quality standards. For this purpose, like other external academic quality assurance agencies, Pearson Edexcel Assured provides its quality criteria to the education institutions and demands an institutional self-review report from them before the site visit (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document).

The Pearson Edexcel verification process relies more on documentary evidence than the observation of the actual teaching and learning activities in class. Therefore, during the site visit, an auditor examines the documented evidence as well as the school premises, and holds informal interviews with students and teachers in order to verify the alignment of the organizations' educational quality management system

with its quality standards. The visit finishes with a feedback session when the auditor summarises his/her findings to the institution's management.

Following the first visit, the agency informs the institutions of the result with an official letter which states that the institution has been granted either a 'conditional' or 'unconditional' Edexcel Assured status. If an institution is awarded a 'conditional' status, this means that it has met the requirements of some of the quality standards. In this case, the agency offers to follow up and assist the institution in overcoming the identified gaps, and conducts another audit visit to verify the compensation of these gaps after a year (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document). If an institution is granted an 'unconditional' status, this means that it has met the requirements of all of the quality standards. 'Unconditional' Edexcel Assured status is awarded for one year. Therefore, after the completion of the first cycle, the agency conducts annual audit visits, and verifies the sustainability of the internal quality management system of an institution every year. After each audit visit following the initial visit, the agency provides an official report to the institution (2012, Edexcel Assured Guidance Document).

3.4 Participants

As a result of the accreditation process, not only the processes that concern the academic, student and administrative affairs of EPS but also the internal quality management practices taking place at FLEPS were accredited. As the main aim of the study was to describe the internal stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the accreditation process on the improvement of the "learning capability" (Goh, 2003) of EPS, the management practices and organizational structures comprised the focal

points of the study. For this reason, the members of two bodies, the Leadership and the Accreditation Advisory Board, which are, in fact, a part of the whole school (FLEPS), were involved in the study as participants representing two internal stakeholder groups within the context of EPS. In addition, the EPS academic staff who were not directly involved in the first cycle of the accreditation process constituted the third group of participants. Table 3.3 depicts the general information on the participants of the study.

3.4.1 The Leadership Team

Within the organizational structure, both divisions of FLEPS (MLD and EPS) are accountable to the Leadership team. The team is comprised of five members: the FLEPS director and the four assistant directors. Two of the assistant directors are directly responsible for the academic and administrative affairs carried out at EPS, and they both teach English at EPS. One of the assistant directors is responsible for the same affairs at MLD. Finally, the fourth assistant director is responsible for institutional and policy development (i.e., the maintenance and sustainability of the coherence and quality of the processes carried out at the whole school [FLEPS]). The Accreditation Advisory Board functions under the supervision of this assistant director.

Table 3.3: General information on the participants of the study

| | Number | Roles |
|--|---------------|---|
| The Leadership Team | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director • Assist. Dir. of FLEPS Institutional and Policy Development • Assist. Dir. of EPS Academic Affairs • Assist. Dir. of EPS Student Affairs • Assist Dir. of MLD |
| Teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board) | 5* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinator of FLEPS Professional Development • Organizer of FLEPS Professional Development • Coordinator of FLEPS Student Welfare and Promotion • Coordinator of MLD Academic Affairs • Coordinator of MLD Testing and Moderation • Organizer of FLEPS Logistics and Timetabling* • Coordinator of EPS Academic Affairs* |
| Teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process | 74 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time staff involved in formal teams (15) • Full-time staff involved in working groups (28) • Full-time staff involved in teaching only (18) • Part-time staff involved in teaching only (13) |

* Two members of the Accreditation Advisory Board (i.e., Organizer of FLEPS Logistics and Timetabling and Coordinator of EPS Academic Affairs) were not involved in the data collection process because one of them was on leave for health reasons and the other was the researcher herself.

3.4.2 EPS Teachers who were Directly Involved in the Accreditation Process:

The FLEPS Accreditation Advisory Board

The FLEPS Accreditation Advisory Board was established in the 2012-2013 Spring semester as a Steering Committee to facilitate the Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation project. For this reason, the data gathered from the Board members aimed to provide the insights of the teachers who were directly involved in the EPS accreditation process.

During the process, excluding the assistant director responsible for institutional and policy development and a consultant specialized in leadership and productivity, the Board was composed of seven members. These members were appointed to the Board based on their separate areas of responsibility at the school (FLEPS). These responsibilities involved the coordination or organization of processes regarding professional development, student welfare and promotion, academic issues and logistics. In the study, two members of the Board (i.e., the Organizer of FLEPS Logistics and the Timetabling and Coordinator of EPS Academic Affairs) were excluded from the target sample because one of them was on leave for health reasons and the other was the researcher herself.

3.4.3 EPS Teachers who were not Directly Involved in the Accreditation Process

When the study started in the 2013-2014 Fall Semester, excluding the two Leadership members teaching at EPS and the Accreditation Advisory Board members, the number of English language teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process was seventy-four (74). Sixty-one (61) of these teachers were employed on a full-time basis while thirteen (13) of them were teaching part-time at EPS. Of the sixty-one (61) full-time staff, forty-three (43) were also members of formal teams and working groups at the school. Thirty-one (31) full and part-time staff were involved in teaching only.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

Data collection from the internal stakeholders identified above was carried out by means of a survey and semi-structured interviews. In addition, publicly available

documentation regarding the managerial practices and organizational structure of the school were gathered as supplementary data.

3.5.1 The Survey

The survey was composed of three parts (Appendix A). Part 1 involved “the Learning Organization Survey” (OLS) (Goh & Richards, 2003). Part 2 included demographic questions, and Part 3 was comprised of one open-ended question.

3.5.1.1 Part 1: The Learning Organization Survey

3.5.1.1.1 The original survey

The result of the literature search yielded Goh and Richards’s (2003) ‘Learning Organization Survey’ (OLS) as the most appropriate option to gather the quantitative data for the study. This was due to the fact that OLS was developed to diagnose the current learning capability of an organization against five internal management practices and organizational processes which were considered as the “enablers” (Goh & Richards, 1997, p. 577) of organizational learning. These “enablers” (Goh & Richards, 1997, p. 577) were identified as a result of a comprehensive literature review and were later named as the “five strategic building blocks of a learning organization” by Goh (1998, p. 16).

Accordingly, OLS was composed of five sub-scales, each of which represented an attribute of a learning organization as defined by Goh (1998, 2003). These were ‘the clarity of purpose and mission’, ‘shared leadership and involvement’, ‘experimentation’, ‘transfer of knowledge’, and ‘teamwork and group problem solving’.

The 'clarity of purpose and mission' sub-scale mainly aimed at measuring whether there was a common understanding of an organization's vision and mission among the participants. The sub-scale also intended to discover the participants' understanding of how their work contributed to the realization of the mission of the organization, and whether their commitment to the goals was promoted by managerial practices and organizational structures.

The 'shared leadership and involvement' sub-scale generally aimed at measuring how the management's commitment to the creation of a learning climate was perceived. In this respect, this sub-scale targeted the participants' views of the leadership attributes which facilitated the foundation of a democratic, trustworthy and fair atmosphere where failures and innovation were mutually considered to be opportunities for learning and development.

The 'experimentation' sub-scale targeted to measure the participants' perceptions of the managerial practices and processes which encouraged the questioning of the current organizational practices and risk-taking, and which fostered innovation and development.

The 'transfer of knowledge' sub-scale mainly measured the participants' perceptions of the benchmarking processes which aimed to promote goal-oriented knowledge transfer across the units of an organization and from the external environment. Accordingly, the sub-scale intended to identify the participants' views on the opportunities which facilitated their acquisition and distribution of knowledge by

means of sharing knowledge and problem solving practices, and which in turn, allowed room for innovation.

The main aim of the ‘teamwork and group problem solving’ sub-scale was to identify the participants’ attitudes to the degree to which organizational structures encouraged stakeholders from a variety of units to collectively solve work-related problems and generate innovative ideas, and which, in turn, reduced dependence on the management itself.

When it was first developed, OLS was made up of 55 items. This initial 55-item survey was reduced by Goh and Richards (1997) to a 21-item one with factor analysis. That is, as a result of the 55-item survey conducted with 100 participants from two different organizations, the items that were “statistically consistent with a single factor with a loading of 0.5 or greater” (Goh & Richards, 1997, p. 579) were selected as the measures for the five sub-scales. Therefore, the OLS was composed of 21 seven-point-likert rating scales with options that ranged from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Accordingly, the lowest possible grade was 1 and the highest was 7. Of the total 21 items, four items were allocated to the ‘clarity of purpose and mission’ sub-scale, five to the ‘shared leadership and involvement’ sub-scale, five to ‘experimentation’, four to ‘transfer of knowledge’, and three items to the ‘teamwork and group problem solving’ sub-scale.

Due to the length of the survey and in order not to jeopardize the reliability of the results, the items were randomized rather than categorically arranged. Also, in order

to monitor the consistency of the responses and therefore, to strengthen the reliability of the survey, four reversed items were used. In this respect, one of the items in the ‘shared leadership and involvement’, ‘experimentation’, ‘transfer of knowledge’ and ‘teamwork and group problem solving’ sub-scales were worded negatively acting as alternate forms of other items in the sub-scales.

Since its development, the survey has been used by a number of organizations (Goh & Richards, 1997; Goh, 1998, 2003) including educational institutions (Goh, 2006) for diagnostic purposes; that is, to discover their current situation with respect to the identified internal management practices and organizational processes which foster effective learning in organizations. In line with this, the reliability of the scale has also been assessed several times in different studies using an internal consistency measure. The results showed that the scale had a good internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.90 (Goh & Richards, 1997; Goh, 2003).

3.5.1.1.2 The Revised (EPS-tailored) Survey

In this descriptive case study, after the initial permission was granted by Professor Goh (Appendix B), some of the items and the instructions were revised in order to facilitate the survey’s use in the EPS context. Following the revision process, in order to increase the validity and reliability of the revised survey a small-scale piloting was conducted. To this end, keeping the content, random distribution of the items and the rating scale intact, in the EPS-tailored OLS some expressions such as ‘managers’ and ‘staff’ were changed to ‘the Leadership’ and ‘teachers’. The instructions were also revised as the researcher aimed to have the data collated by means of an optic reader. Following this, the clarity and the language of the items as

well as the layout of the survey were moderated a few times by one colleague and three experienced researchers. As a result of this piloting process, some examples and explanations were added for some of the expressions such as ‘the Leadership’, ‘experimentation’ and ‘problem solving groups’. Also, one of the negative statements was converted to a positive one as it was found to be too confusing. In the original 21-item scale there were four reversed items. After the moderation process, this number was reduced to three.

Following this revision and moderation process, Professor Goh was contacted once more and permission was requested to use the OLS in its EPS-tailored form (Appendix A). The professor granted the permission expressing one concern regarding the use of the term ‘Leadership’ corresponding to two different groups of people (i.e., the director and the assistant directors). However, after a thorough consideration of Professor Goh’s concern in the matter with an experienced researcher, this researcher decided to keep the term Leadership to refer to both the director and the assistant directors because in the organizational structure of the school the FLEPS Leadership was considered as being composed of a team of people with a common goal and set of strategies to manage the school. Table 3.4 presents the categorical organization of the items in the EPS-tailored OLS.

3.5.1.2 Part 2: Demographic Questions

Contrary to common practice, in this study the demographic questions were presented in the second part of the survey. The questions were intended to gather some basic factual information related to the participants’ work experience. Accordingly, they focused on the participants’ duration of work at EMU EPS or

FLEPS, their current work status, whether they held any extra-responsibility positions, and if so, which post they were holding.

Due to the fact that the demographic data focused on some basic factual information, it was believed that answering the demographic questions required relatively less concentration on the part of participants, especially when compared to the items in the learning organization survey. Therefore, it was believed that leaving them as items to be answered later in the survey (i.e., in Part 2) would help ensure the participants' full concentration on the items in the learning organization survey (the only quantitative source of data for the study) (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 115). It is mainly for this reason that the demographic questions were placed in Part 2 of the survey.

Another point which needs clarification as regards the demographic data is the exclusion of 'gender'. This was based on the fact that as a part of the female dominant ELT world, the majority of the target population at EPS/FLEPS was composed of females. Therefore, gender was not considered as a variable during the data analysis. For this reason, demographic questions did not include an item on 'gender'.

Table 3.4: Categorical organization of the items in the Learning Organization Survey

| Sub-scales | Number of items | Distribution of items in the survey | Items |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Clarity of Purpose and Mission | 4 | 2 | There is widespread support and acceptance for the school's vision statement. |
| | | 18 | I understand how the vision of this school is to be achieved. |
| | | 19 | We have opportunities for self-assessment with respect to goal attainment. |
| | | 20 | The school's vision statement identifies values to which all teachers must conform. |
| Shared Leadership and Involvement | 5 | 7 (r) | The Leadership of this school resists change and is afraid of new ideas. |
| | | 11 | The Leadership and teachers in this school share a common vision of what our work should accomplish. |
| | | 13 | The Leadership of this school frequently involves teachers in important decisions. |
| | | 15 | The Leadership of this school can accept criticism without becoming overly defensive. |
| | | 17 | The Leadership of this school often provides feedback that helps to identify potential problems and opportunities. |
| Experimentation | 5 | 3 | I can often bring new ideas into the school. |
| | | 6 | From my experience, people who are new to this school are encouraged to question the way things are done. |
| | | 8 | The Leadership of this school encourages teachers to experiment new solutions in order to improve work related processes. |
| | | 10 | Practical innovative ideas to improve work related processes are often acknowledged by the Leadership. |
| | | 12 (r) | In my experience, new ideas from teachers are not treated seriously by the Leadership. |
| | | | |
| Transfer of Knowledge | 4 | 1 | I often have an opportunity to talk to other colleagues at EPS about successful practices or work activities in order to understand why they succeed. |
| | | 4 (r) | Failures regarding the system, learning, teaching and assessment activities are seldom constructively discussed in our school. |
| | | 9 | New work related processes that may be useful to the school as a whole are usually shared with all teachers. |
| | | 16 | We have a system that allows us to learn successful practices from other schools. |
| Teamwork and Group Problem-Solving | 3 | 5 | Current organizational practice encourages teachers to solve problems together before discussing it with the Leadership. |
| | | 14 | Teachers can usually form informal groups to solve work-related problems. |
| | | 21 | Most problem solving groups (e.g., Teaching Teams, Working Groups, Curriculum Development Committee) in this school feature teachers from a variety of functional areas or divisions. |

(r) refers to a reversed item

3.5.1.3 Part 3: The Open-ended Question

Part 3 aimed to collect some qualitative data and involved one open-ended question. The question invited the participants to comment on the relationship between the Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process and some managerial and organizational processes at EPS. These processes were considered to be aligned with the key concepts embedded in Goh's (1998, 2003) definition of the core building blocks of a learning organization, and were provided as six prompts. These were:

- development of a common goal
- involvement in decision-making
- innovation
- communication
- collaboration
- problem-solving

This section of the survey was moderated twice by an experienced researcher. As a result of the moderation process very slight changes were made in the root of the question.

3.5.2 The Interview Guide

For the interviews, a general interview guide approach (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003 cited in Turner, 2010) was adopted in order to be able to ensure the collection of the insights of the participants in a more focused and systematic, and yet flexible way (McNamara, 2009 cited in Turner, 2010). The guide was prepared before the interviews were conducted and involved procedures to be followed as well as some open-ended questions and probes to be used if and when needed (Appendix C). The

questions and prompts mainly aimed at having the participants reflect on and provide their accounts of experiences and offer their opinions regarding the attributes of a learning organization embedded within the institutional development cycle of EPS before and after the school got accredited. More specifically, they aimed to gather the participants' insights into the impact of the accreditation process on:

- the school's mission and vision,
- the participants' roles in the school's achievement of its mission,
- the Leadership's provision of goal-oriented innovation and problem-solving, and professional development opportunities to the academic staff,
- the extent of individual and collaborative use of these opportunities by the academic staff,
- the Leadership's acknowledgement of and feedback on the academic staff's contributions.

3.5.3 Publicized Documents

The publicly available documentation regarding the managerial and organizational processes at EPS was used as supplementary data. In the light of this, any document or artefact such as the minutes of meetings, presentation slides, EPS Academic Affairs Teachers' Handbook, policies, or documents produced by the Continuing Professional Development working group were used as additional support material at the discussion stage.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Following the researcher's application to the FLEPS Administration to conduct the study at EPS (Appendix D) and the permission granted by the school, the study was conducted in the 2013-2014 academic year.

3.6.1 Sampling

For the data collection, different sampling techniques were adopted. For the quantitative data, all of the Leadership team (5 in number), the Accreditation Advisory Board (i.e., directly involved teachers) (5 in number) and teachers who were not directly involved in the process (74 in number) were targeted.

For the qualitative data, depending on the data collection tools (i.e., survey Part 3 and semi-structured interviews) different sampling techniques were used. In this respect, for the third part of the survey random sampling technique was used, and all of the internal stakeholders were targeted. For the interviews, a purposeful sampling technique was adopted, and a smaller number of representatives from each target group was selected. During the selection process, the choice of participants who would potentially provide rich and varied insights into the impact of the accreditation process on the managerial practices and organizational process at EPS was the main concern. Accordingly, participants who were expressive, who were more likely to provide a wider spectrum of experiences and who could critically express their attitudes towards accreditation, management practices and organizational processes across a wide spectrum of agreement were considered as the best options in the selection of participants. As a result, from the leadership team, three (3) members whose accountability areas were directly related to the accreditation process and/or

the academic processes at EPS were selected. Similarly, from the directly involved teachers (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board), three (3) members who were teaching English at EPS and holding posts that carried additional responsibility regarding professional development or student welfare at the school were chosen. Finally, from the teachers who were not directly involved in the process, nine (9) full-time teachers from different sub-groups (i.e., team members, working group members and teachers with 20-hour teaching load) were included in the final selection.

3.6.2 The Survey

Towards the end of the 2013-2014 Fall semester, the surveys, optic answer sheets and consent forms were hand-distributed by the researcher. At this stage, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and they were asked to complete the survey only after they had given their consent to do so. As a result, a total of eighty-two surveys were distributed. Of this total, five surveys were given to the Leadership team members, five to the 2012-2013 Accreditation Advisory Board members (i.e., directly involved teachers) and seventy-two to the teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process, and who accepted to take part in the survey (i.e., two members of this target group refused to participate in the survey at the distribution stage).

Because the survey was distributed at the end of the fall semester, a time on the academic calendar when most of the academic staff were busy with grading their students' portfolio work, term projects and exam papers, the collection of the survey forms completed by the participants took three weeks.

At the end of three weeks, fifty-nine (59) surveys were gathered. This provided a response rate of 70.2% for the quantitative data analysis (i.e., Survey Part 1). Table 3.5 depicts the frequencies and the demographic data of the survey participants.

According to the demographic data obtained in the survey (Part 2), of the targeted five members of the Leadership team, all five (5) responded to the first part of the survey. Of these 5 participants, four members of the Leadership team have been teaching at (FL)EPS for sixteen to twenty years and one (1) member for twenty-one to twenty-five years. The academic status of two (2) members was higher than senior instructors (i.e., assistant professors) and three (3) members were senior instructors.

Of the targeted five directly involved teachers (i.e., members of the Accreditation Advisory Board), all five (5) responded to the first part of the survey. Three (3) of these teachers have been teaching at (FL)EPS for eleven to fifteen years, one (1) for sixteen to twenty years and one (1) participant for twenty-one to twenty-five years. Three (3) members were senior instructors and two (2) were instructors.

Of the targeted group of teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process (74 in number), forty-nine (49) responded to the first part of the survey,

Table 3.5: The frequencies and the demographic data of the survey participants

| Demographic Questions | | Frequency (N=59) |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Years of work at EMU EPS / FLEPS | 0-5 | 7 |
| | 6-10 | 1 |
| | 11-15 | 8 |
| | 16-20 | 16 |
| | 21-25 | 16 |
| | 26-30 | 0 |
| | unknown | 11 |
| Current work status at EMU English Preparatory School | Part time Instructor | 8 |
| | Full time Instructor | 10 |
| | Full time Senior Instructor | 28 |
| | Other | 2 |
| | unknown | 11 |
| Extra-responsibility positions | NO | 16 |
| | YES | 32 |
| | unknown | 11 |
| Extra-responsibility positions (YES) | Team member | 8 |
| | Working group member | 10 |
| | Coordinator | 2 |
| | Coordinator and Advisory | 5 |
| | Board member | 5 |
| | Leadership member | 5 |
| | unknown | 13 |

while only thirty-eight (38) of them provided information about their professional profile. In other words, eleven (11) participants chose not to provide personal information about themselves. Of the 38 participants who provided the demographic data, seven (7) participants have been teaching at (FL)EPS for a minimum of three months, one (1) for six to ten years and five (5) for eleven to fifteen years. Eleven (11) participants have been teaching at (FL)EPS for sixteen to twenty years and fourteen (14) participants for twenty-one to twenty-five years. Eight (8) participants were employed as part-time instructors. Eight (8) participants were instructors and twenty-two (22) were senior instructors.

The third section of the survey (i.e., the open-ended question) was responded to by forty-one (41) participants. Of this total, the leadership team was represented by four (4) participants, the Accreditation Advisory Board (i.e., teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process) was represented by three (3) participants, and teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process were represented by thirty-four (34) participants.

3.6.3 The Interviews

During the 2013-2014 Spring semester, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a smaller number of representatives from each target group. In this way, three (3) Leadership members, three (3) directly involved teachers (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board members) and nine (9) EPS academic staff who were not directly involved in the accreditation process were selected for the interviews. The original plan was that all interviews would be conducted on a one-to-one basis. However, towards the end of the period in which the interviews were carried out two teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process were interviewed as a pair and two teachers could not be interviewed due to time constraints. Therefore, a total of seven (7) teachers from the original nine (9) selected who were not directly involved in the accreditation process were interviewed. Thus, thirteen (13) participants in all were interviewed.

All of the interviews were conducted in the participants' offices in order to ensure that the participants' expression of their opinions and experiences could be done in a relatively more comfortable atmosphere. During the interviews, the general interview guide which was prepared before the interviews was followed (Appendix C).

Accordingly, at the beginning of the interviews, the aim and significance of the study was explained to the participants. At this stage, the role of the researcher, what she would do during the interview, why they had been approached as participants, how long the interview would approximately take, and why there was a need for a recording of the interview were also clarified. All of the participants were assured that their real names would not be used but would be replaced with pseudonyms, thus guaranteeing that what they said would be kept confidential. Following this, the participants were given the consent forms and invited to ask questions for any further clarification. After the collection of some work-related factual information from the interviewees, the researcher started the interviews with the question; “Where do you see the preparatory school in achieving its mission and vision?” Following this opening question, the researcher asked questions only to keep the interviews focused on the framework built around the attributes of a learning organization embedded within the institutional development cycle of EPS before and after the school got accredited and to prompt the interviewees to provide further insights. Therefore, while some of the questions were reshaped during the course of the interviews, some remained unaltered and were used as they were structured before the interviews began.

The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. All the interviews were tape-recorded, freeing the researcher (interviewer) to concentrate on the interviews themselves and thus necessitating only the minimum of note-taking. At the end of the interviews, the interviewees were asked if they would like to make

any further comments. As a last step, the interviews were transcribed to a Microsoft word document for content analysis (Appendix E).

3.6.4 Collection of the Documentation

The publicly available documentation which was used as supplementary data were located on the school premises and on the school's official online communication portal called "The Discussion Forum" (<http://ied.emu.edu.tr>). This archive of material was referred to when necessary as additional support at the discussion stage. Therefore, the document collection process from the university's public domain was driven by the reflection of the researcher on the results of the survey and the interviews, and took place on an on-going basis especially during the analysis stage. At this point, it has to be admitted that being an insider proved to be a great advantage to the researcher as it not only facilitated the location and selection of the relevant documentation in a relatively shorter time span than would otherwise have been possible but also allowed for direct access to the Discussion Forum.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

For the data analysis, different methods were used depending on the sort of the data gathered. In this regard, the quantitative data were analysed by means of SPSS 20 software, and for the qualitative data content analysis was conducted.

3.7.1 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

After the collection of the survey forms, the participants' responses to items 1-21 (Part 1) were analysed to determine if there were any participants who clearly displayed a bias by choosing only one option in all of the items (e.g., choosing 'strongly agree' [G] or strongly disagree [A] for all of the items). It was found that

none of the participants chose only one option and thus, all of the responses from the 59 participants were valid and could be retained for analysis. Following this, the quantitative data collected in the first part of the survey (items 1-21) and the demographic data in Part 2 (items 22-25) were collated by means of an optic reader. After that, the data were transferred to an excel file and the responses which were in letter format were assigned their numeric values for items 1-21 (Part 1) as follows:

- ‘A’ (‘strongly disagree’) was assigned 1 point,
- ‘B’ (‘moderately disagree’) was assigned 2 points,
- ‘C’ (‘slightly disagree’) was assigned 3 points,
- ‘D’ (‘not sure’) was assigned 4 points,
- ‘E’ (‘slightly agree’) was assigned 5 points,
- ‘F’ (‘moderately agree’) was assigned 6 points,
- ‘G’ (‘strongly agree’) was assigned 7 points.

Following this, the reversed items (4, 7 and 12) in Part 1 were converted in order to make the analysis of the results possible. In this respect, the numerical responses in the reversed items were converted into their opposite correspondents as follows:

- 1 point was converted to 7 points,
- 2 points were converted to 6 points,
- 3 points were converted to 5 points,
- 4 points was not converted,
- 5 points were converted to 3 points,
- 6 points were converted to 2 points,
- 7 points were converted to 1 point.

For items 22-25 (i.e., Part 2: The demographic data), the responses which were in letter format were assigned to their correspondents. For example, in item 22 (How long have you taught at EMU English Preparatory School/FLEPS?), 'A' corresponded to '0-5 years' and so all the 'A' responses were assigned this description.

Next, the data were transferred to an SPSS 20 data file for analysis. After this, two consecutive reliability analyses were administered. This was necessitated by the fact that, at this stage, there was still the concern with the 11 participants who did not provide any demographic data. For this purpose, the first reliability test was conducted for all 59 participants. This analysis yielded an adequate internal consistency result with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.878. Following that, the second reliability test was carried out with the 48 participants who provided the demographic data, and a very similar result with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.846 was obtained. After this, the total scores for each sub-scale (i.e., building block) and each item (i.e., descriptor) were identified by means of descriptive statistics.

At this stage it has to be noted that due to the small number of the two internal stakeholder groups (i.e. the Leadership team [5 in number] and the directly involved teachers [5 in number]), it was not possible to compare and identify any statistically significant view differences among the different internal stakeholder groups by means of the quantitative data. For this reason, quantitative data analysis focused on the identification of the overall perceptions of the internal stakeholders (i.e., 59

participants) of the core components of a learning organization rather than focusing on the view differences or similarities among the three internal stakeholder groups.

3.7.2 Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were gathered by means of the third section of the survey and the interviews. For both sets of data, content analyses were conducted following the guidelines provided by Berg (2001). In this respect, a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning was applied, and the data were thematically coded into categories of emerging patterns of the participants' views on the core components of a learning organization and the impact of the accreditation process on these attributes. During the coding process, each stakeholder group was assigned a letter code followed by a number representing different participants. In this respect, 'L' was assigned for the Leadership team and the interview participants were coded as L1, L2 and L3. 'D' was assigned for the group of teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process, and 'N' was assigned for the group of teachers who were not directly involved in the process. The participants for each group of teachers were coded in a similar manner as the Leadership Team.

As the starting point of the coding process, the research questions were used, and, for each participant group, the two sets of qualitative data were sorted in accordance with the theoretical framework provided by Goh (2003) (i.e., the five building blocks of a learning organization). Following this, the data were tentatively coded into emerging themes. These themes were, then, analysed in order to provide insights into the emerging patterns in participants' views on the attributes of a learning organization embedded within institutional development cycle of EPS before and

after the school got accredited. During the analysis, content words and modality were used as aids; however, the main focus was on the latent meaning emerging from the responses of the participants. Also, the data were mostly kept in its verbatim form; however, the repetitions and hesitation markers were eliminated, and on some occasions a few sentences were completed or linked with a verb, a noun or a linker to help ease the comprehension of the message. These additions were indicated in brackets.

In order to ensure the reliability of the results, the coding scheme was also tested by another colleague. This was done by sharing with the colleague the coding criteria and the interview data gathered from the Leadership team. Before coding the data separately, the researcher and the colleague coded ten quotations which were randomly selected from three Leadership members' interview data together in order to establish standardization. Then, the researcher and the colleague coded the rest of the data gathered from the Leadership team separately. Following this, the codings were compared. After making some adjustments and/or recoding some parts of the data, and thus, ensuring agreement on more than half of the quotations, the researcher continued the coding process alone.

3.8 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations. First of all, as a means of investigating the scope of the enquiry, the study adopted a normative approach to learning organizations. In this respect, the learning within an organization was not considered as an emergent phenomenon but as a collective activity which was facilitated by a set of pre-defined conditions and circumstances considered to be enablers of

organizational learning (Goh, 2003). This approach to learning organizations was also aligned with the nature of the Edexcel accreditation scheme in that, as clearly reflected in its quality indicators, the scheme also focuses on and verifies the management strategies as well as the organizational policies and practices which serve for the education programs' accomplishment of their mission against pre-defined standards.

Secondly, as discussed earlier, FLEPS is composed of two parts: Modern Languages Division (MLD) and the English Preparatory School (EPS). This descriptive case study's focus, however, was limited to only one of the divisions of the school. In this respect the centralized structure of EPS compared to the more fragmented organizational framework of MLD provided the ideal conditions in which the study could be conducted.

Furthermore, the fact that an English language school was being explored from the angles of quality assurance and learning organizations naturally provoked the questions of 'who' was involved in this collective learning and development activity, and especially, 'why' the students, as one of the major internal stakeholder groups, were excluded from the scope of the study. This was done on the grounds that within the frameworks drawn by a normative approach to learning organizations and the Edexcel accreditation scheme, the study aimed to draw a comprehensive picture of the quality management and enhancement cycle of the school. In this cycle, every input (e.g., policies, mission, planning of the curriculum, the syllabi, etc.), process (e.g., communication and feedback on learning and teaching) and output (e.g.,

reflection, assessment and progress) processes were related to English language learning/teaching. Also, the terms ‘learning’ and ‘learners’ in this descriptive case study were used with the assumption that they involve all of the internal stakeholders. In other words, everyone involved in this cycle were considered to be generating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and consequently, developing or progressing in the light of the insights they gained. Therefore, not only the EPS students but also the FLEPS Leadership team and the EPS teachers were considered to be learners. With this consideration in mind, the study limited its scope to mainly two learner groups (i.e., the Leadership and the teachers) because the inclusion of the students into this complex cycle of learning would well deserve another comprehensive inquiry where the students could be regarded not only as one of the participants of or one of the contributors to the ‘learning’ cycle but also as the group that represents the outcome of the whole learning process.

Another set of limitations concerned the data gathered by means of the survey. First of all, in the survey, the demographic questions were placed in the second part and on a separate page together with the third part. As a result, some participants may not have seen this section, and thus, may have failed to provide demographic data (i.e. not responding to Part 2) or to respond to the open ended question (i.e., Part 3). Alternatively, some may have provided the demographic data but did not transfer it to the optic answer sheet, despite the instructions indicating that the second part of the survey was also to be responded to on the optic answer sheet.

Furthermore, because the demographic data were collated on the optic answer sheets, and the survey booklets and the optic answer sheets were not numbered, the sampling process for the third section of the survey proved to be very challenging. In this respect, sorting the qualitative data gathered from the third section of the survey could be done only because the targeted numbers in the Leadership team and the Accreditation Advisory Board members (i.e., directly involved teachers) were small. Had the targeted number of representatives in these two groups (i.e., the Leadership team and Accreditation Advisory Board) been higher, it would not have been possible to assemble the qualitative data (i.e., Survey Part 3) accordingly.

The results of the interviews may also have been affected due to the following limitations. Firstly, it has to be pointed out that being an insider did not always present itself as an advantage to the researcher, especially during the interviews. For example, because of the researcher's familiarity with the interviewees and her 'insider' role at the school, some of the participants may have provided their accounts of experiences or voiced their opinions in a way that they thought the researcher expected them to.

Secondly, with some participants, especially those that were being highly critical of issues related to the administration, it proved difficult and sometimes impossible to get in-depth insights or details regarding their criticisms even when they were prompted to elaborate further on the issues. Rather, some opinions may have been voiced tactfully and the accounts presented did not go any further than the surface level.

Another limitation was the number of the interviews held due to time constraints. In total, thirteen interviews were held with a selected group of interviewees. Therefore, despite the due diligence of the sampling process, some potential insights which could have been gathered from the rest of the academic staff may have been left uncovered.

However, the study also has some delimitations. In order to draw a valid and reliable picture of the phenomenon under study, this descriptive case study adopted a triangulation methodology (Yin, 2002) and collected both quantitative and qualitative data by means of a survey and semi-structured interviews from the aforementioned stakeholders. It is assumed that the diverse participant population and the use of a variety of data collection tools has contributed to the richness and breath of the pertinent data.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, after a brief overview of the research questions, each question is answered in accordance with the results of the data analysis.

4.1 The Overview of the Research Questions

The present study aimed to identify and describe the perceived impact of Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization at the Eastern Mediterranean University English Preparatory School (EMU EPS) from the perspective of three different groups of internal stakeholders. Accordingly, the study aimed to answer the following questions;

2. How are the core components of a learning organization perceived by the academic staff at EMU EPS?
3. How does the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process impact on the development of these core components in EPS from the perspectives of:
 - a. the Leadership team?
 - b. the teachers who were directly involved in the process (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board)?
 - c. the teachers who were not directly involved in the process?

In order to address these questions, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered by means of a survey and semi-structured interviews from the targeted internal stakeholder groups. The quantitative data gathered by means of the EPS-tailored Learning Organization survey provided the participants' overall perceptions of internal quality management and assurance practices (i.e., core components of a learning organization). The qualitative data, on the other hand, provided the participants' perceptions of the impact of the Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process on these practices. (i.e., development of the core components).

The quantitative data represent the perceptions of 70.2% of the overall EMU EPS population. The first part of qualitative data gathered by means of the third section of the survey corresponds to the perceptions of 48.8% of the overall target population (84 in number). Of this total, the Leadership team's perceptions are represented by four (4) participants, which corresponds to 80% of the target group. The directly involved teachers (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board) are represented by three (3) participants, which corresponds to 60% of the target group. The EPS academic staff who were not directly involved in the accreditation process are represented by thirty-four (34) participants, and this corresponds to 45.94% of the target population.

The second part of qualitative data which were gathered by means of the semi-structured interviews represent the experiences of a selected group of participants who could potentially provide rich and a varied range of perspectives from each targeted stakeholder group. In this respect, these data provide the perspectives of three (3) Leadership members (60%), three (3) directly involved teachers (i.e.,

Accreditation Advisory Board members) (60%), and seven (7) teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process (9.45%).

4.2 The Participants' Perceptions of the Core Components of a Learning Organization

In order to address the first research question, quantitative data were gathered by means of first part of the survey (i.e., EPS-tailored Learning Organization Survey) from the Leadership team, the teachers who were directly involved in the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process and the teachers who were not directly involved in the process. In this way, the quantitative data provided the participants' perceptions of the core components of a learning organization. These were 'the clarity of purpose and mission', 'shared leadership and involvement', 'experimentation', 'transfer of knowledge', and 'teamwork and group problem solving'. In the following sections, these data are presented successively.

4.2.1 'Clarity of Purpose and Mission' as a Core Component

The quantitative data gathered on the 'clarity of purpose and mission' aimed to describe the participants' beliefs on whether there was a common understanding of the school's vision and mission among the participants. The results also intended to reveal the participants' understanding of how their work contributed to the realization of the mission of the school, and whether their commitment to the school's goals was promoted by managerial practices and organizational structures.

As Table 4.1 depicts, overall the participants were not sure of this core component of a learning organization. More specifically, regarding the provision of opportunities

Table 4.1: The participants' averages on 'Clarity of Purpose and Mission'

| Item number | Item | Mean | Corresponds to | N |
|-------------|--|------|----------------|----|
| 2 | There is widespread support and acceptance for the school's vision statement. | 4,47 | Not sure* | 59 |
| 18 | I understand how the vision of this school is to be achieved. | 4,93 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 19 | We have opportunities for self-assessment with respect to goal attainment. | 4,46 | Not sure* | 59 |
| 20 | The school's vision statement identifies values to which all teachers must conform | 5,20 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| Total | | 4,46 | Not sure* | |

* *Leniency to slight agreement*

for self-assessment with respect to goal attainment and the presence of a widespread support and acceptance for the school's vision statement, they were not sure. However, they slightly agreed that they understood how their work contributed to the realization of the mission of the school, and that the school's vision statement identified the values to which all the teachers had to follow.

4.2.2 'Shared Leadership and Involvement' as a Core Component

The quantitative data collected on 'shared leadership and involvement' generally aimed at measuring how the management's commitment to the creation of a learning climate was perceived. Regarding the participants' responses, therefore, the aim was to find out their views on the presence of a democratic, trustworthy and fair atmosphere at the school where all the participants (i.e., the Leadership and the teachers) could mutually and openly discuss failures and innovation, and consider them as opportunities for learning and development.

As revealed by the participants' responses to the survey items on this sub-scale (Table 4.2), the participants were not sure of the presence of this attribute of a

Table 4.2: The participants' averages on 'Shared Leadership and Involvement'

| Item number | Item | Mean | Corresponds to | N |
|-------------|--|------|------------------------|----|
| 7 | The Leadership of this school resists change and is afraid of new ideas.(R) | 4,78 | Slightly disagree (R)* | 59 |
| 11 | The Leadership and teachers in this school share a common vision of what our work should accomplish. | 4,17 | Not sure | 59 |
| 13 | The Leadership of this school frequently involves teachers in important decisions | 4,02 | Not sure | 59 |
| 15 | The Leadership of this school can accept criticism without becoming overly defensive | 3,49 | Slightly disagree** | 59 |
| 17 | The Leadership of this school often provides feedback that helps to identify potential problems and opportunities. | 5,32 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| Total | | 4,35 | Not sure | |

**Reversed item*

** *Leniency to uncertainty*

learning organization at EPS. That is, despite the fact that they slightly agreed on the Leadership's provision of feedback to identify potential problems and opportunities, as regards the Leadership's openness to change and innovation and their acceptance of criticism they slightly disagreed. Furthermore, they were not sure whether the Leadership involved the teachers in important decisions and whether the Leadership and the teachers shared a common vision.

4.2.3 'Experimentation' as a Core Component

The quantitative data gathered on 'experimentation' targeted to measure the participants' perceptions of the managerial practices and organizational processes which encouraged the questioning of the status quo and risk-taking at the school. The

results (Table 4.3) revealed that overall there was a slight agreement among the participants on the ‘experimentation’ core component of a learning organization. In

Table 4.3: The participants’ averages on ‘Experimentation’

| Item number | Item | Mean | Corresponds to | N |
|-------------|---|------|----------------|----|
| 3 | I can often bring new ideas into the school | 4,95 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 6 | From my experience, people who are new to this school are encouraged to question the way things are done. | 4,61 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 8 | The Leadership of this school encourages teachers to experiment new solutions in order to improve work related processes. | 4,69 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 10 | Practical innovative ideas to improve work related processes are often acknowledged by the Leadership. | 4,92 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 12 | In my experience, new ideas from teachers are not treated seriously by the Leadership.(R) | 4,39 | Not sure (R)* | 59 |
| Total | | 4,71 | Slightly agree | |

*Reversed item

this respect, despite the fact that they were uncertain about the degree of seriousness of the Leadership’s treatment of the new ideas, they slightly agreed that they could bring new ideas into the school and that the new teachers were encouraged to question the way things were done. They also slightly agreed that there was encouragement for and acknowledgement of experimentation by the Leadership at the school.

4.2.4 ‘Transfer of Knowledge’ as a Core Component

The ‘transfer of knowledge’ sub-scale mainly measured the participants’ perceptions of managerial practices and organizational processes which promoted goal-oriented knowledge transfer through the units at the school and from the external

environment. In other words, the sub-scale intended to reveal the participants' views on the provision of opportunities which facilitated their acquisition and distribution of knowledge by means of sharing knowledge and problem solving practices.

The participants' responses to the items in this subscale (Table 4.4) have shown that they slightly agreed on this attribute of a learning organization. More specifically,

Table 4.4: The participants' averages on 'Transfer of Knowledge'

| Item Number | Item | Mean | Corresponds to | N |
|-------------|---|------|----------------|----|
| 1 | I often have an opportunity to talk to other colleagues at EPS about successful practices or work activities in order to understand why they succeed. | 5,31 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 4 | Failures regarding the system, learning, teaching and assessment activities are seldom constructively discussed in our school. (R) | 3,51 | Not sure (R)* | 59 |
| 9 | New work related processes that may be useful to the school as a whole are usually shared with all teachers | 4,86 | Slightly agree | 59 |
| 16 | We have a system that allows us to learn successful practices from other schools. | 4,37 | Not sure | 59 |
| Total | | 4,51 | Slightly agree | |

**Reversed item*

they slightly agreed that they often talked to other teachers at EPS about successful practices or work activities and that new work related processes that may be useful for the whole school were shared with all teachers. However, they were not sure if the failures were constructively discussed in the school or if there was a system that allowed the transfer of knowledge from other schools.

4.2.5 ‘Teamwork and Group Problem Solving’ as a Core Component

The quantitative data collected on ‘teamwork and group problem solving’ mainly aimed to reveal the participants’ perceptions of the managerial practices and organizational processes which encouraged teachers to solve problems and generate innovative ideas together, and which in turn, reduced dependence on the Leadership. As Table 4.5 shows, the participants slightly agreed on teamwork and group problem-solving. That is, they slightly agreed that that most formal problem solving

Table 4.5: The participants’ averages on ‘Teamwork and Group Problem solving’

| Item number | Item | Mean | Corresponds to | N |
|-------------|---|------|-----------------|----|
| 5 | Current organizational practice encourages teachers to solve problems together before discussing it with the Leadership | 4,39 | Not sure | 59 |
| 14 | Teachers can usually form informal groups to solve work-related problems | 4,03 | Not sure | 59 |
| 21 | Most problem solving groups (e.g., Teaching Teams, Working Groups, Curriculum Development Committee) in this school feature teachers from a variety of functional areas or divisions. | 5,07 | Slightly agree | 58 |
| Total | | 4,50 | Slightly agree* | |

**Leniency to uncertainty*

groups in the school involved teachers from a variety of functional areas or divisions. However, they were not sure whether there was room for the teachers within the organizational processes to solve problems together before discussing it with the Leadership nor were they sure if the teachers could usually form informal problem solving groups.

4.3 The Participants' Perceptions of the Impact of the Accreditation Process on the Development of the Core Components of a Learning Organization

In order to address the second research question, the qualitative data were gathered by means of a survey (Part 3) and semi-structured interviews from the Leadership team, the teachers who were directly involved in the process (i.e., Accreditation Advisory Board) and the teachers who were not directly involved in the process. In this way, the qualitative data provided distinct insights of three target groups' perceptions of the impact of the Edexcel accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization as well as of the core components themselves. In the following sections, these data are presented consecutively.

4.3.1 The Leadership's Perceptions

The qualitative data gathered from the Leadership team provided in-depth insights into their perceptions of the impact of the Edexcel accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization as well as the core components themselves. These were 'the clarity of purpose and mission', 'shared leadership and involvement', 'experimentation', 'transfer of knowledge', and 'teamwork and group problem solving'. In the following sections, these data are presented.

4.3.1.1 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Clarity of Purpose and Mission'

As regards the impact of Pearson Edexcel accreditation process on the development of 'clarity of purpose and mission', the team's expressions revealed their agreement

on the facilitating role of the process in the collation and revision of the school's policies and procedures for the first time. This, according to one of the Leadership team members, helped "a group of people" to see the whole picture from similar perspectives which in a way promoted the development of a common goal:

Edexcel helped us to collate institutional documents which were scattered here and there. Policies were written for the first time. I believe these policies and Edexcel enabled us (a group of people) to see the overall picture. When people start to look out from the same window and see the same or similar picture, I believe this in a way means that this process served towards the development of a common goal. (Survey Part 3, L2)

Yet again, regarding the mission and the vision of the school, for the Leadership team, the school still needed some time to realize its main goal and to orient itself towards learner support and learner-centeredness in practice. In this respect, highlighting the teachers' role particularly in the area of learner support, one team member, for example, said:

I don't think our mission is clear in our school. For some teachers, it may be clear but, for the majority I can say that they see their roles as teaching, and that's it, most of the time. However, they should see beyond this. [By beyond teaching I mean] supporting students. But, first of all, I think they should be able to see a clear picture and their role in it. (L1)

Similarly, reiterating the mission of the school, another member highlighted that the students were actually the mission itself. According to this member, in spite of the fact that accreditation helped in, particularly, meeting the provision of "internationally recognized language qualifications" aspect of the mission, the school needed to go back to its vision and mission and look at itself on the extent to which they focused on the learner aspect in practice:

In our mission, it says ‘high-quality international education in a modern dynamic learning environment’. Focusing on the word ‘dynamic’, how are we going to do it? Here... it says ‘update our courses continually to meet our students’ needs’. *Students’ needs!** The second point; ‘help our students *prepare* for their future careers’. How? Again *students*. And, of course, ‘internationally recognized language qualifications’. Well, accreditation is part of it. It is the biggest achievement. And, ‘a wide range of extra educational, social and cultural support’. Support to whom? Again *students*. Students are everywhere in our mission. *They are* our mission.

...

I think we need to go back to our mission and vision and read it again and again. There is a lot of hard work going into our programmes but how much we are looking at things from the students’ perspective; I’m not very sure. (L2)

**Emphasis is indicated in italics.*

For these Leadership members, regarding learner support and learner-centeredness there were some developments on paper. That is, the school was moving forward by aligning its courses to Common European Framework of Languages (CEFR), and updating its syllabus and course materials in order to promote learning and learner-centered focus. However, it still needed some time to realize these in practice. In this respect, referring to the accreditation experiences, including the EAQUALS experience of the school, one member, for example, said:

My accreditation experiences make me think that learner-support is the first thing that we should be looking at. Because when you consider Edexcel quality criteria ... we start with the student, we finish with the student. ... So that should be our primary focus. Student and student. ... For about ten years now we have been talking about student-centered teaching. For God’s sake, do we practice student-centered teaching? It was in EAQUALS report. It said the teacher was killing himself/herself, but they were not doing student-centered teaching. Now we have great books. Publishers also focus on this and books are designed keeping this in mind. And with the help of syllabus revision, objective-based teaching, not course-book based teaching, [is promoted]. It seems we are going forward. I think we are on the right track but we should be patient and we should be working hard towards that [student-centered teaching]. (L2)

Similarly, referring to the previous accreditation experience of the school and focusing on the future goals of the institution, another member highlighted the individual's role in the development of learner-centered practice as a common goal:

When I consider the improvement since we started here, of course there were lots of things before we started as well, but when I look at our mission I can say that we have updated our courses. We keep updating our courses, and base our studies on the CEFR. ... but first of all there must be a common goal. I mean, let's say as an institution if we are aiming at going for CEA or EAQUALS, I mean, another accreditation, and if everybody is aware of this goal, and aware of their own role towards that goal, then, in that sense, they can just think about how they should improve themselves to meet that goal. As you know we had a kind of feedback from the previous [EAQUALS] experience. So, if, for example, as a whole we have a problem in teaching, in the sense that we don't have or we didn't have student-centered classrooms, and if teachers are aware of the fact that we should be going towards a student-oriented teaching, then they should orient themselves towards the goal of the institution. This way, we can just kill two birds with one stone, simply. (L1)

4.3.1.2 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Shared Leadership and Involvement'

The qualitative data also provided some deeper insights into the Leadership's perceptions on the impact of Pearson Edexcel accreditation process on managerial practices and organizational structures which facilitated the creation of a fair and trustworthy atmosphere at EPS. In this respect, the first point which was clearly visible in the Leadership's expressions was that they did not think that the Pearson Edexcel accreditation process affected the school's organizational structures which promoted the teachers' involvement in the decision making processes. One Leadership team member, for example, said:

I don't think it [Edexcel accreditation process] affected our decision making system that much. We have been trying to involve our teachers in decision making process for a long time. (L3)

In a similar manner, another member said:

As for involvement in decision making, I think Edexcel accreditation process was not very influential, however, this can be considered during the implementation process. (L2)

For the Leadership members, the presence of such organizational processes and structures as the online discussion forum, Teaching Team Meetings (TTMs), Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) and the FLEPS Council facilitated the teachers' involvement in decision making processes. Still, according to the team, the teacher involvement in the decision making processes was not enough. Giving the low number of teacher representation in the school's Council, one member, for example, expressed her concerns regarding the teachers' unwillingness to participate in decision making processes:

The school council has six teacher representatives. Three from MLD [Modern Languages Division] and three from EPS [English Preparatory School], but unfortunately, we have always had problems trying to get the teacher representatives. At the moment in our council, instead of six, there are three teacher representatives. (L3)

For the majority Leadership team, the underlying reason for the teachers to refrain themselves from contributing to the school's development was their lack of trust. However, being self-critical of themselves, the team also believed that this could be overcome if they developed effective strategies in order to gain the teachers' hearts and minds, and to encourage their commitment and involvement in the decision making processes. In this respect, one of the team members, for example, highlighted the need for the Leadership team and the core teams to make teachers feel that there was a genuine interest in listening to what they have to say and involving them:

I don't think that the teachers will be against contributing to the institution if we know how to approach them. I mean if we listen to them, they might have things to say. There were quite a sea-change in our institution, and people just want to be out of certain things because they lose faith in certain projects and developments. They may be prejudiced or biased based on some negative experiences in the past. But Leadership or certain core teams should not be acting or should not be making plans based on prejudices or negative experiences. We should be the ones taking the institution forward. And, we can do that only if we think positively, if we make them feel that we believe in them and we want to involve them. (L2)

Similarly, criticizing their way of sharing the mission and the vision with the teachers, another team member pointed out to the need for the Leadership to find a better means of communication with the teachers in order to raise their awareness on their strengths and encourage their involvement:

Teacher involvement is crucial. But first of all, we need to help teachers to understand what our mission is and their role in our mission. As the leadership, I don't think we are successful in that. We shared our mission and vision with them as a document, but we didn't have sessions to talk about how we can move towards our mission and vision in detail. So, I can't say we've done much on that. We should find a practical way of reaching people and showing them where we are going, and establish it for the school. Not just for the leadership to reach somewhere. We can't reach anywhere without the teachers' support. We have to make them aware of their strengths and where they can support the school. (L1)

According to the same member, "the lack of trust" issue could be tackled by generating some alternative ways of connecting with the teachers and/or revising certain organizational processes in order to keep the communication channels open between the Leadership and the teachers:

Teachers have the right to propose anything they would like because we have a system like the CDC [Curriculum Development Committee] and our Council. They can go to these bodies and propose whatever. But still, the system should be revised in the sense that teachers feel more encouraged because in some cases, I think that they feel that no matter what they say these bodies have already decided, and what they say is not really taken into consideration. (L1)

4.3.1.3 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of ‘Experimentation’

Similar to their perspectives on ‘shared leadership and involvement’, the qualitative data gathered from the Leadership team on the impact of Pearson Edexcel accreditation on ‘experimentation’ revealed that according to the team, such organizational structures as Curriculum Development Committee (CDC), Teaching Team meetings (TTMs) and the Council functioned as the organizational structures which aimed to encourage teachers to question the status quo and take risks. In this respect, one Leadership member, for example, said:

CDC is the platform for the teachers to address their academic concerns and make proposals, and so, teachers have the platform to provide solutions to problems and of course come up with new ideas. They have got every opportunity to do that. [Also] the teacher representatives can bring every concern to the school Council, as well. (L3)

However, for the team, in order for such structures as CDC or Council to be fulfilling their aims efficiently, there was a need for a common understanding of the school’s mission and vision and a school-wide commitment to the values of the school so that everyone could align their ideas or proposals targeted towards the development of the school’s basic processes (i.e., learning, teaching, assessment) to the school’s actual values and goals. More specifically, according to the Leadership, some teachers’ limited orientation towards learner support and learner-centeredness were at times reflected on their proposals, as well. For one Leadership member, for example, the fact that some proposals were teacher-oriented rather than being learner-oriented was an indication of the teachers’ tendencies towards the professional and institutional development:

There are two kinds of proposals here; one: to make the teachers' life easy, and two: to make the students' learning experience better. If it is the former, "No" [it doesn't contribute to the teachers' professional development]. If it is the latter, "Yes" [it contributes to the teachers' professional development]. I mean, on the discussion forum, I see that there are two kinds of proposals; one: for the betterment of my life as a teacher, and two: for the betterment of my students' learning experience. So, if I'm interested in my own comfort that will not contribute to my professional development. But there are a lot of people who are genuinely interested in their students' learning, and they are, I'm sure, making very good proposals in the TTMs [Teaching Team meetings] as well. (L3)

A similar point was made by another team member referring to a proposal made by teachers on an assessment procedure and the reason for its rejection by the Council:

... it was just the teachers' point of view without looking into what was going on around the world. In such an important issue, they shouldn't just provide what is good for teachers. They should also talk about the systems. Testing is a very important area; I mean testing and assessment. They should have taken this into consideration and researched about what's going on in the other institutions. (L1)

For this reason, for the Leadership team, the developments in the area of internal quality management and assurance systems were the key to the facilitation and encouragement of the teachers' engagement as well as to the development of school-wide reflective practice aligned with the goals of the school. Yet again, according to the Leadership team, the absence of incentives to motivate the highly experienced teacher population who had been working at the school for a long time was one of the greatest challenges. However still, this challenge was also an absolute reason for further steps to be taken towards the development of organizational quality management and assurance practices which would establish a coherent and systematic link between bottom-up and top-down processes. In this respect,

highlighting the need for a change in the mind-sets of the teacher population and the Leadership's role in facilitating this change, one Leadership member, for example, said:

[Institutional development] starts with 'self'. I mean, at this school, we are at a certain age and we are learning together. We cannot force people to do self-criticism, reflection or to improve the way they are teaching unless we make them feel the need and want to do it. That's our challenge. They're not going to do it if you just tell them that they have to do this. We have to make them understand the need for it and make them want it. It's a big, big challenge. ... I mean we have some colleagues saying "I'm experienced. What am I going to learn? I just want to retire. Why are you making me suffer? Just let me be myself, earn my money and go home. In a few years' time I'm going to retire anyway." This doesn't help institutional development. In fact, it doesn't help them because if you are a learner yourself you can help learners in their learning processes ... and the institution. (L2)

According to the Leadership team revival of professional development and performance management was a necessary step in re-establishing the dynamicity of learning at the school. In this respect, the team believed that the newly formed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) working group played an important role in assisting the development of school-wide goal-oriented reflective practice:

There hasn't been a structured professional development programme for years at this institution ... Professional development; one [and] performance management; two. ... So, now with the initiation of CPD this semester, I am much more positive. ... I believe CPD will make an impact on the school's institutional development. [However,] the impact will not be seen this semester. The impact I think will be felt next semester and the new academic year. (L3)

Similarly, highlighting the incentive aspect of the CPD and its facilitative role in teachers' involvement, another team member said:

As leaders we have to have clear goals for the institution and lead teachers and guide teachers towards that goal, broadly. How are we going to do this? Well, first of all, we have to have a system. And, when I look at our

new structure here, we have CPD ... CPD can be helpful [in] shar[ing] that goal and steps to that goal, and also [making] resources or facilities available for teachers to increase the involvement and to make the goal meaningful for teachers so that they understand that they can be part [of it]. [So,] we should give them an aim and the outcome. Teachers should be able to see the outcome [and say] “if I do this, I will get this”. [At this point] “What’s in it for me?” [aspect] is important because, especially after teaching so many years we need to see a kind of benefit in doing something. (L1)

According to the Leadership, the accreditation process also had some impact on these developments in the sense that it provided the re-assurance of the need for the revival of professional development and performance management at the school. Accordingly, one leadership member highlighted the role of the Edexcel quality indicators:

We had all these things in mind [i.e., forming the working groups in general, and professional development and performance management in specific] from the very beginning. Accreditation of course made an impact on these initiations or on these developments, [but] we have always been thinking about these developments. We have always planned for these developments. However, with accreditation; once we started looking at the quality indicators, everything started to make more sense. But I’m not going to say that we did these things because of accreditation so it’s not that. But we became more conscious, more powerful because we saw that what we had been doing were already in the quality indicators. (L3)

In similar veins, another team member pointed out to the link between professional development and institutional development and how the feedback received from the inspector stimulated a feeling of the urgency in the matter of revival of a structured professional development initiative:

One thing that the accreditation process taught us was about teacher development. Teacher role is very important in the delivery of our programmes and everything. I mean, student satisfaction is based on

teacher satisfaction. So, maybe it helped us to see that. I mean again we were aware of fact that there is no professional development unit at our school but how it is affecting all the other processes; maybe, with the feedback that we got from the verifier maybe it helped us to realize it is high time that we initiated this at our school. Maybe in that respect it helped us. (L2)

4.3.1.4 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of ‘Transfer of Knowledge’

The qualitative data gathered as regards the ‘transfer of knowledge’ showed that similar to their views on the ‘clarity of purpose’, ‘shared leadership and commitment’ and ‘experimentation’, the Leadership team believed that the school had the necessary organizational structures to encourage goal-oriented knowledge transfer across the units at the school and from the external environment. According to the team, the Council, Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) and Teaching Team Meetings (TTMs) provided the opportunities for the teachers to explore and consider the ‘common’ practices regarding the curriculum development around the world and in other schools, and act on the context specific problems accordingly. For one Leadership member, for example, successful practices regarding the curricular issues around the world were discussed at CDC, and these discussions triggered some next steps which contributed to the school’s development:

Through these meetings [CDC meetings] a platform has been set for ideas to be discussed. And I know that in the last two CDC meetings, there have been discussions on the speaking exam, the speaking part of the proficiency. [Also] there have been discussions on ‘piloting’, etc. So, as a result of these CDC meetings, steps are taken towards development. I know that some criteria for the piloting process have been written by a group of people. So, out of the CDC, some ad-hoc committees are being formed to work on some issues, which is institutional development. (L3)

Similarly, giving the example of the previously mentioned proposal on an assessment procedure and its rejection by the Council, another Leadership member highlighted how the “feedback” role of CDC and the Council could contribute to the professional development of individual teachers:

Before the teachers came to the council with this proposal, they got some recommendations from the CDC, and then the Council gave them some feedback. When I recall the discussion there, it must have contributed to the development of these teachers because there we didn't talk about our opinions. We talked about the truth; the facts about what is going on around the schools. In that sense, I think, it must have [contributed to their professional development]. (L1)

However, related with afore mentioned two concerns mainly regarding the ‘clarity of purpose and mission’ and ‘shared leadership and commitment’, the Leadership team believed that there was still need for some revisions in the system in order for the weaknesses or failures to be addressed constructively. More specifically, as regards the school’s partial orientation towards learner support and learner-centeredness, the Leadership team believed that there was a need the adoption of a systems approach to the solution of the problems. For this reason, according to one of the leadership members, for example, a particular focus on systematic ‘data-collection’ processes would help the development of school-wide data-based reflective practice and decision-making processes:

We can evaluate our work with our mission and vision in mind with the data results ... We need to look at data in order to be able to talk comfortably on that issue [learner-centeredness]. I mean we have been collecting data but we haven't been looking at it from that [learners'] perspective. We need to look at the implementation and what the data is saying to us. I think we need to be informed, and then speak or make plans depending on what the data is telling us. We need to systematize the way we collect, analyse and interpret data. And our plans should be based on what the data is saying to us. (L2)

As regards the data collection, another point that needed to be addressed was the ‘trust issue’. In this respect, similar to the previously presented views of the Leadership team, this member of the team also pointed out to the transformational role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the development of data-based problem-solving. More specifically, for this Leadership member, CPD had a big role in establishing self-confidence among teachers in order to create an atmosphere where they could also feel comfortable to share their weaknesses, and thus, could get the support to overcome them:

How are we going to make them feel trusted? We should be twisting the systems and come up with ways of making them aware of their strengths, but also make them feel comfortable to share their edges so that they can get the necessary support. In the system we are in, they’re afraid to share their weaknesses. They see it as some kind of threat. For example, observation, class observation; that’s a threat. A student coming and saying something about them; that’s a threat. Use of Turkish; this and that. We should move in the right direction all together. But while trying to move forward, they should be reflecting on their own experiences and they should not be afraid to talk about their weaknesses. Well, that’s again up to us or CPD. Focus on their strengths. Praise them for their strengths so that we can also talk about weaknesses. (L2)

4.3.1.5 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of ‘Teamwork and Group Problem Solving’

The qualitative data gathered from the Leadership team on ‘team work and group problem-solving’ did not reveal any major differences from what they said on the other four core components and the impact of the accreditation experience on them. In this respect, among the most prevalently highlighted points were the ‘trust issue’ and the facilitative role of certain managerial and organizational processes which encouraged teachers’ collaborative problem-solving activities. More specifically, the team believed that the biggest challenge was to overcome the ‘divide’ or ‘us and

them' culture at the school in order to establish a team spirit. In this respect, one of the team members, for example, said:

We create this "us" and "them" culture or this culture was there and we couldn't change it. This is a fact that we need to work on; the culture change, and getting rid of this "us" and "them" culture. Because our operational roles may change but our roles as teachers will not change. This is the key thing. (L2)

For the Leadership team, there were also some positive developments as for the involvement of the teachers into the institutional self-reflection and caring and sharing mechanism. According to the team, the fact that the teaching-team meeting-structure was revised had some impact on the teachers' involvement and the development of self-reflective practice. In this respect, one team member, for example, highlighted how teachers were setting targets and how the student data were shared with the teachers during the teaching team meetings (TTMs):

The TTMs have improved very, very much especially, in the last one and a half, two years. First of all, as you will remember, we started to get the teachers' ideas, categorize them and give the answers on the discussion forum which was wonderful. And now, I know that even greater developments are taking place. People are setting targets in their teaching teams. Focus groups with students have started and their results are being taken to TTMs. I mean, wonderful, wonderful developments in that area. So, I am very happy about that. (L3)

Similarly, another Leadership member, pointed out to the facilitative role of the new TTM structure in the "awakening" of the school:

I didn't participate in teaching team meetings but from colleagues who participated in these meetings, I felt the positivity, the optimism, the energy. I mean they're awakening. There is this awakening, and I'm very happy to hear all this. (L2)

According to this Leadership team member, regarding the “awakening” of the school, particularly the involvement of the middle management into the ‘institutional self-evaluation’ aspect of the accreditation experience may have had some impact. More specifically, this member thought that the institutional self-evaluation may have had some impact on the Leadership team and the Accreditation Advisory Board which in turn filtered down to the teachers:

I hope that accreditation was the triggering factor for this awakening. Maybe for certain team members it was. I am talking about Leadership team members [and] Advisory Board members here. I mean the management teams or curricular team; middle-management. Because if there was this awakening with accreditation in these teams, then it’s now being reflected on the audience maybe, I don’t know. Because, you know, our awareness raised. I mean we started questioning; “did we do this right?” “did we do that right?” I mean we discussed amongst ourselves, and we started discussing how we should be doing things in a different way and so on, and we affected each other in teams. Now, we are involving teachers into the whole process. (L2)

Similarly, another team member pointed out to the possible impact of the “preparation” stage on the awareness of certain staff members in key positions on quality standards. For this member, this awareness had a considerable influence on these staff members’ way of working and perceiving things:

Since the accreditation, things started to make more sense. People have started be more aware of the requirements of a good institution, of a quality institution because of accreditation. [I mean] not after Edexcel, but through the preparation for Edexcel and everything, I’m not sure about all the staff, but I know that staff in key positions have changed their way of working, their way of looking at things [and] their way of practicing things; tremendous things since accreditation. (L3)

4.3.2 Directly Involved Teachers’ Perceptions

Similar to the Leadership team, qualitative data were gathered by means of the survey (Part 3) and semi-structured interviews from the FLEPS Accreditation

Advisory Board members representing the EPS teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process. These data aimed to reveal these teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Edexcel accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization. In the following sections, these data are presented consecutively.

4.3.2.1 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Clarity of Purpose and Mission'

Concerning the impact of the accreditation process on the development of 'clarity of purpose and mission', the Board members' expressions revealed that they did not believe the accreditation process to have made a considerable impact on the development of a common understanding of the mission and the vision of the school. In this respect, one of the Board members, for example, pointed out to the limited number of teachers who were directly involved in the accreditation process, and said that there was no time to involve others in order for the process to facilitate the development of a common goal:

I'm not sure about this [whether the process had any influence on the development of a common goal at the school]. The Edexcel accreditation process was worked on and completed by an appointed committee. ... Policies and procedures were created and worked on by committee members ... I believe the Edexcel committee worked as best as they could in a limited time to develop what they believed to be a common goal (based on their experience) for the betterment of the institution. ...[But] there was limited time to involve others in order to develop a common goal. (Survey Part 3, D1)

Similarly, and yet from a slightly different angle, another Board member also emphasized the process's contribution as partial. This member, however, also pointed out to the need for further spread of information and motivation to the others:

[Edexcel accreditation process contributed to the development of a common goal] partially. We need to spread the information and motivation to the others more. (Survey Part 3, D2)

As regards the current situation, the Board members provided a wide range of perspectives to the underlying reasons for their slight agreement with the extent of a school-wide adoption of a learner-centred approach, which was the main point of the mission and the vision. For example, taking the matter from the ‘whole’ school’s perspective, one of the Board members highlighted that the school was in progress in the sense that it was trying to align all of its systems to a learner-centred approach. However, for this member, the degree of a coherent application of these initiatives was still unclear, and this was the main issue that needed addressing so that the intention could be ‘clearly’ communicated with everyone:

We have a clearly stated mission and vision. I see that we are trying to actually adapt all our system to the learner-centered approach because we know the term. We know what it means, but we need to check actually whether we are practicing it in every aspect of our life; [I mean], in our units, we have testing, we have curriculum, we have teachers in the class, we have professional development ... We are working on our mission ... I know that we are aware of the importance of it [the role of learner-centered-practice in the achievement of our mission] ... but [it is] sort of disconnected. Whatever we try to do, we should make it clear for the students, and we should make sure that everyone knows about what we are doing. Actually, I’m not sure how much we are successful in making what we are doing for the students clear. (D3)

In similar veins, and yet from a slightly narrower perspective, another Board member stressed that ‘what was happening in the classroom’ had not been aligned to the envisioned ‘quality of learning standards’ of the school yet. In this respect, this member pointed out to the role of professional development in the establishment of a shared vision at the school:

The current Prep School's Leadership has concerns about the quality and making it a vision shared by the whole staff. I think, in that respect, we're on the right track. ... [But] professional development I think is one of the key issues regarding the improvement of the school, because at the end of the day, the teachers are the key agents in the whole process. So, the Leadership can have the best mission [and] vision in the world but, unless this is shared with the staff, and unless your staff have got awareness on quality learning, it's very difficult to become a better or quality institution. ... [and] when I look at the past and the current situation, what I see happening in the classroom ... is not telling me that people or all the staff are aligned to the quality expectations especially regarding the main mission of a school, which is language learning. (D2)

Similarly, and yet again from another perspective, the third Board member established a link with the mission and the notions of 'collaboration', 'learner support', and 'professional development' in order to point out to the presence of different interpretations of 'commitment' at the school:

I think there is collaboration taking place, but I am not sure if we all have the correct interpretation of collaborating. My interpretation of collaborating may be different from someone else's, and I think what I am becoming aware of is that we all have a different interpretation of being a family together and doing things ... It's also the students will be a part of it [mission and vision], and again, I think we all have different interpretations of assisting, helping students, being a teacher in the classroom. Although I am not a parent I would like to behave towards my students and give them the service they deserve that I would expect if I had a child who was at the university ... I'd expect him/her to get that support. And in return, I would also expect the staff to have a certain commitment to the institution and to their own development... I think commitment is a big word. (D1)

4.3.2.2 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Shared Leadership and Involvement'

The qualitative data provided some insights into the uncertainty of the Board members' on the presence of a dialogical atmosphere where the solutions to the problems could be discussed constructively at the school. In general, these views

were in line with what they said as regards the degree of clarity of the mission and the vision. More specifically, however, for some Board members, there was a need for the establishment of a coherent link between professional development and institutional development in order to encourage goal-oriented constructive discussions at the school. In this respect, questioning the degree of teachers' awareness of what 'institutional development' entailed, one of the Board members, for example, underlined the need for further steps to be taken to raise the teachers' awareness of the school's policies so that the teachers could orient themselves towards goal-oriented development:

I think we need to make people more aware that we have these policies and these documents, and make people aware of what institutional development is. If you ask a teacher what institutional development is, do they know? We've just been in a meeting [referring to the Continuing Professional Development orientation session] both me and yourself where they [CPD working group members] talked about professional development, and they also talked about institutional development. Teachers know more or less what professional development is, but I am not sure if they know what institutional development is. (D1)

Similarly establishing the link between professional development and institutional development, another Board member focused on the Leadership's provision of opportunities for the teachers' contributions to the decision making processes. For this member, the communication channels had always been open at the school and the Leadership's attitude towards the teachers' contributions was related with the degree of 'constructiveness' of the ideas provided:

Institutional development and professional development are very close of course. I believe we have very well trained staff. I mean, most of them have gone through sort of basic in-service training courses, and this school has been a kind of learning institution most of the time. And most of the time, most of the teachers had the chances to contribute to the decision making procedures. I mean, not necessarily as a member of the council or

something, [but] the channels have always been open to a certain extent, sometimes less, sometimes more. I think we've got that opportunity here. ... I mean they [the Leadership] give chances to people to express their opinions. How much the teachers make use of that. I'm not sure. I think the channels are open most of the time, as long as they [people's opinions] are in a constructive manner. (D2)

After providing a detailed account of the opportunities provided for the teacher-engagement in decision-making practices at the school (e.g., Curriculum Development Committee, the Council and Teaching Team meetings), this member (D2) also pointed out that the limited degree of teacher-willingness to be involved in these practices was the main reason for the Leadership to stand as the sole initiator of the problem-solving activities most of the time. For this reason, according to this member there was a need for further exploitation of alternative ways of communication such as focus groups in order to transfer the responsibility of problem-solving to the teachers more.

Slightly from a different window, another Board member took a 'whole' school perspective, and pointed out to a need for the adoption of a systems approach at the school in order for the establishment of a coherent integration of bottom-up and top-down processes. According to this member, this would, in turn, enable the intent (i.e., school-wide adoption and practice of learner-centeredness) to be communicated, understood and embraced by all the parties involved. For this member, however, at the moment the school was targeting many things at a time, and because of the absence of 'data' to provide the transparent means for decision making, the whole process projected itself as too complicated to understand and cope with:

We're trying to do a lot of things, but I'm not sure whether all [of what] we're doing is really what we should be doing. I mean, I'm not sure about the quality, not quantity, of what we're offering. I'm not sure about whether they are serving the goal, and [also] whether it is simple enough for the students to comprehend ... I [also] hear teachers complaining that they have difficulty in coping [, too]. ... We need to measure 'what we are offering' and 'what we are achieving'; actually, [to see] whether this serves for this century's students at EMU. ... What I learned from this process [accreditation process] is that we should be targeting less. We can target, for example, students; we can target a concept which is in our mission: students, learner-centered teaching or education, and this involves testing, curriculum [and] professional development; all aspects of the school. So everyone knows that we are working on this with different hats, and we cooperate. We work on one goal, altogether and a student is also part of this process as well, in different ways, not only as a learner but as an individual providing feedback and so on. (D3)

4.3.2.3 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Experimentation'

The interview data revealed that the Board members held a positive stance to the Leadership's attitude towards the establishment of a school-wide learner and learning-oriented practice. However, as in the previous core components, the Board members considered the matter from different perspectives and provided a range of areas which needed further attention, as well.

Considering the matter from the 'empowerment' perspective, one of the Board members, for example, stressed that the school was moving forwards in terms of orientating not only its curriculum but also its professional development initiatives to a bottom-up and/or learner and learning-centred approach. However, there was still the challenge of changing mind-sets to be overcome so that 'in-the-classroom' applications of learner empowerment could be observed:

The whole idea of quality, the whole idea of professional development has a kind of bottom-up approach [because] it's not very easy to implement something which is not appreciated or when people don't have enough information, awareness about such crucial or sensitive issues, especially professional development. I mean it's not very easy to tell people "You need professional development. You need to improve yourself. You need to develop as a teacher." It has to come from the bottom, and the Leadership, I think, is ok with that. (D2)

Similarly and yet from a slightly different angle, another Board member pointed out to the challenge of the absence of 'self-initiated' motive for professional development at the school:

Our teachers believe that professional development as it is the institution serving them something on a plate. In today's world is not. These opportunities cost money they cost a lot of money. Institutions don't have the money that they did in the past. And to be honest, it's all about going out there and finding your opportunities too. Professional development doesn't have to be going on a course or getting a certificate. There is an obsession on getting a certificate. Everyone wants a thank you letter or a certificate for everything they do. ...[But] there is so much out there which is free nowadays you know ... There is so much, so many articles, so many people you can contact. There is a global community out there that can support you. ... So I think for professional development, as a person [you should] not be so idealistic, but down scale, be more practical, and try and be what we expect our students to be. We expect our students to be autonomous. We should be autonomous, too. (D1)

In addition, regarding the creation of a learning atmosphere, some Board members also elaborated on the presence of 'mutual acknowledgment' at the school, and stressed that there were still certain issues which needed addressing both on the part of the Leadership and on the part of the teachers. In this respect, making associations with the notions of 'communication' as well as 'sincerity' of the intent and 'clarity of the purpose and the mission', one of the Board members, for example provided a perspective to the school-wide understanding of acknowledgment:

Acknowledgment means something genuine. The only thing is that you're being acknowledged and you're being acknowledged sincerely. This is an important issue, not for the sake of being acknowledged but feeling that you are really being acknowledged. This is very, very important. Sometimes with a cup of coffee and with a real 'Thank you' something that you feel. Not just with a piece of paper. So, my understanding of acknowledgement is "What was the aim and how I personally contributed to achieve that aim". This tells me that my teacher and my Leadership, whoever the person is, is aware of what I'm doing, and how I am doing it, and it's me, not anyone else who contributed and who made this part of this picture a success. If that is missing, then, where else can I put the acknowledgment here? ... (D3)

Accordingly, for this member (D3), there still was a need for further communication and clarification of the mission and the vision as well as the individuals' roles in the achievement of it in order for a common understanding of "acknowledgement" to settle. To this end, according to this Board member (D3), there were certain points which needed the consideration of both the middle management and the Leadership:

...So, how many people are clear about what they are doing? I believe that only a certain number of people are aware of what this institution is trying to achieve, and their role in it. ... The mission is framed and put on the corridors [but] how much is in the mind of everyone, so that whatever we are doing is serving to that mission? ... So, in how many sessions, it could be TTMs [Teaching Team meetings], workshops, or whatever we do, are we relating what we are doing to our mission and vision? ... Maybe something is missing there. Because this [mission and vision] is our measurement. I can measure my success, my role in light of this. And again, how can my Leadership assess my contribution and acknowledge what I'm doing in that respect? [Again] I'm not sure if everyone's contribution is acknowledged or acknowledged enough, and this is more important than individuals being acknowledged. It's like your acknowledging the success of your certain students in the class but not everyone's. So, it is important. I'm not saying there's a differentiation, but if people are actually saying that they're not being acknowledged enough, and how many people are saying that? This is something that should be considered in the institution. (D3)

Similarly as regards the ‘mutual acknowledgment’, another Board member pointed out to the impression which the feeling of constant ‘crisis management’ created on some teachers:

I would think that it feels that most of the time people are too busy dealing with crisis on a daily basis that there was acknowledgement to suggestions. I am not saying suggestions have never been appreciated. Suggestions have been appreciated. ...[but] it is also knowing which suggestions to work with because there are probably so many suggestions, and some of them are probably very good, and some of them are probably ridiculous ... some of them are probably in the air or radical, and you don’t know what to work with. And I guess there needs to be something that filters these suggestions to help the Leadership. (D1)

For this member (D1), however, teachers also needed to develop some sense of empathy in order to be able to provide constructive and goal-oriented suggestions for the development of the basic processes of the school:

I think people tend to be selfish and think about ‘me, me, me’ all the time and not try to see from the other points of views. I think when you go with a suggestion you have to try to think about things globally. You have to try to think about problems this will cause, and you also have to think about if it does cause problems what your solutions would be. This is just very basic teacher training: what other problems you would consider and how would you solve them ... This is relevant in all aspects of working life... When you go with a new idea or views you’d always have to think of possible problems and solutions. (D1)

This Board member eventually summarized his/her account of the degree of mutual acknowledgment at the school as:

I think teachers feel that for some reason that their suggestions are not taken into consideration. Maybe it is because they are not able to explain it properly. Maybe it is because leadership are not able to explain why or why not it is not feasible. Maybe it is kind of people are too busy to listen. They [teachers] just think “I gave a suggestion. It was not accepted. It was not listened to.” (D1)

4.3.2.4 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of ‘Transfer of Knowledge’

The interview data revealed that the Board members’ perceptions of the impact of the accreditation process were in line with their previously indicated views. More specifically, concerning the school’s learning so far, three of the highlighted developments pointed out by different Advisory Board members were the initiation of the Continuing Professional Development, the new role of the Advisory Board and the insight unit, and the awareness that came with the Edexcel accreditation process of the vitality of the adoption of a systems approach in order to enable the transparency of the decision making processes. In this respect, after stressing Edexcel accreditation’s role as one of the motives for the developments taking place at the school, one of the Board members pointed out to new facilitative role of the Advisory Board in the dissemination of knowledge and the realization of the policies:

I think that we’ve made crucial steps forward. I mean, I’m not referring just to the Edexcel accreditation, but that was another motive, I think, in this respect. Now, for example, as the Advisory committee, it is our revised, let’s say, job description to make sure that all these policies, all these things that we’ve put together, wonderful things, are actually happening, especially in terms of what is happening in the classroom. (D2)

Also, as highlighted before, for this member, the alignment of ‘what’s happening in the classroom’ to learner and learning centred practice was one of the primary issues, and in this sense, the revival of professional development after a “hibernation” period was a necessary step taken by the Leadership and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) working group. Accordingly, for this Board member, CPD had

a crucial role of in promoting the learner and learning centred practice as well as in contributing to external as well as internal accreditation processes. Yet again, according to this member, there were still some challenges that needed to be overcome, especially, for the CPD initiative to involve classroom observations and thus, to have some measurable impact on ‘what’s going on in the classroom’:

It’s a major operation, so we are going to eat the elephant in small pieces. ... So with the group of teachers now we’ve got classroom visits, we’ve got peer observations. But that’s only limited to something like 18 or 19 part-time teachers. The rest at the moment only have a kind of a [*the participant did not finish the sentence*] ... actually with the data we collected from the teachers we formed our own definition of continual professional development and it says there to teachers that it [professional development] should be self-initiated and needs-based. This is quite important. ... So, at the moment, we can’t jump into the classrooms or jump into conclusions regarding this but, let’s leave it to the teachers, and they eventually through this reflection process they will set their targets, they will work on their targets, they will reflect on their targets, their achievements and self-appreciation and appreciation in general, and eventually this will have some kind of a positive impact. I mean, this is as we call a kind of transformative model of continual professional development. So, this gives more opportunities to the staff to contribute to the whole process and shape it up together, because at certain points we collect feedback, shape it up, modify it, adapt it and adopt some other ideas. This is the idea. (D2)

Another development emphasized by another Board member was the newly functioning “insight unit” at the school. According to this Board member, this unit could facilitate the diagnosis of the gaps at the school and provide the grounds for data-based problem-solving and decision-making processes:

We need to analyze this [how far the school has achieved learner-centeredness] and there’s an “insight” team which is newly functioning. It was established before but it started to function and I think they will be able to provide a better answer for this question. [It is] a separate unit actually, which is supposed to collect data from different parts of the school and analyze it and actually maybe look at the vision and mission and what could be done based on this data. Because every time we try to make a change or initiate a change, actually we base our changes mainly

on sometimes not exactly on a real feedback, I should say. I mean feedback is also important. I mean to get feedback from different people, including students as well. So, this insight team, I hope, will be able to serve for that purpose and share the outcomes, actually, with everyone. (D3)

Also, according to this member, Edexcel accreditation process had a considerable contribution to the school's realization of the importance of a systems approach to the establishment of transparency at the school:

We need the data to make things clear ... [So] they don't become rumors or hear sayings or only observations, to make this system work and this system does not depend on people. In our case, there was something but there was not a clear system. I don't know if you could call it a system before accreditation, and then we realized that how much important it is to have a system and how this system should work. (D3)

4.3.2.5 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Teamwork and Group Problem Solving'

The interview data also revealed that the Board members' views on the impact of the process on 'teamwork and group problem-solving' were in line with their previously indicated views. In other words, for some of the Board members there was still need for a change in teachers' mind-sets towards professional development as well as learner and learning-centred practice. Yet again, in a manner of summarizing the school's developmental journey, one of the Board members highlighted the contributing role of the Edexcel-triggered institutional self-reflection exercise:

[Achievement of the mission and the vision] It's a teamwork, even though you have specific roles to play, still a teamwork, and we may need support and guidance too. ... This could include Leadership, someone in the accreditation board, lots of things. We are actually trained to be teachers. We are not trained to be leaders, to be managers, to be a member of accreditation board. So, we trained ourselves, we learned on the way, and we were trying to cook something and become cooks. So, it is the same thing for leadership as well. ... So there should be a system which works,

in order [for] the wheels to be able to turn, we should know how to turn it. So it's something that we are learning. I mean, we've realized this but we're still learning and we're trying to make it part of our life. (D3)

4.3.3 Not Directly Involved Teachers' Perceptions

Similar to the two previous groups, the qualitative data were gathered from the EPS teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process. These data provided their perceptions of the impact of the Edexcel accreditation process on the development of the core components as well as some further insights into their perceptions of the core components. In the following sections, these insights are presented.

4.3.3.1 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Clarity of Purpose and Mission'

Regarding the impact of Pearson Edexcel accreditation process on the school's achievement of its vision and mission, the not directly involved teachers provided a wide range of perspectives in different degrees of optimism. For some teachers, the process did not have much impact other than some unfavourable changes in the curriculum. In this respect, one of the teachers, for example, said:

No impact, at all. Nothing. They just changed the syllabus. Did we have any developments or anything else? Nothing. (N5)

Another group of teachers with rather positive inclinations, focused on the 'verification' and 'accountability' aspect of the whole process. However, these teachers also provided different perspectives among themselves as regards the contributions of the accreditation process in these respects. That is, while some teachers focused on the 'external respectability', some others emphasised the

‘internal respectability’ the school obtained as a result of the process. In this regard, one of the teachers, for example, pointed out to an understanding that accreditation provided the re-assurance of the school’s commitment to continuous development:

We were doing things but we thought that we were trying to discover America every day. Or, this system we’re applying now is something very good and we didn’t know why it was very good and why it was working. But after accreditation, we’ve seen that most of the things that we used to do were approved. Accreditation gave me a positive feeling that the background of what we are doing now was OK. It was constructed in a strong way, let’s say. We didn’t discover America with accreditation. Most of the things we were doing were right anyway. (N3)

Similarly in a positive manner, but from a slightly different angle, another teacher highlighted that the accreditation process contributed to the school in its attempts towards goal-oriented development. For this teacher, the process, in fact, helped the school to establish its road-map towards development and eliminated the possibility of side-tracking it:

I think before this accreditation, like five years ago, we were lost. We kept writing our mission and vision during the meetings but somehow we forgot them. That’s how I felt. But now, I think we’ve got the road, and some of us or most of us, we’re aware now where we’re going, where we have to go. I can’t say all of us are aware of that, but I know, for example, where I have to go better than before. (N2)

As for the present situation regarding the vision, mission and their roles in the achievement of them, not directly involved teachers also provided some insights in different ways. For one of the teachers, for example, the school was committed to its goals. Yet again, it was at the very beginning of the road, and there was still some room for development in many different areas:

I think we’re doing something good and we’re trying our best to reach our aim. And considering the mission, I think we need to take some more

steps. There is kind of a long way to go in terms of different aspects of the system. Like, we still need to work on portfolio, syllabus, our teaching; administrative issues, communication with students and teachers. (N3)

Similarly, for another teacher who was not directly involved in the accreditation process, despite the fact that there were some people who were trying to “bend the rules”, the majority was committed to the school’s mission:

I see some people working towards the goal. And, I see some people trying to bend the rules and regulations, but are still trying to do what’s necessary, but is it serving its purpose? I don’t know. But I think I can say that the majority is trying. They are trying to help students, guide students, [and they are] trying to encourage learning. (N1)

Yet again, for another not directly involved teacher, the “rules” were the very reason for the teachers for not being able to do their job efficiently:

We always do our best as teachers. I don’t believe that there is anyone here who doesn’t want to do anything. But we have to obey the rules. Some of the rules, I am unhappy about. For example, doing what syllabus says or giving a high mark on the portfolio. I’m not happy about that, and I think it affects our teaching. We spend a lot of time on doing those portfolios, instead of teaching ‘writing’ or [something] else. We have to follow the syllabus, nothing else. We have to finish everything in the syllabus because they will have that in the exam, and yet sometimes we don’t have the time to teach, we have to touch on it and leave it. (N5)

4.3.3.2 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of ‘Shared Leadership and Involvement’

As regards the impact of Edexcel accreditation process on ‘involvement in decision making’, especially the qualitative data gathered by means of ‘the survey’ indicated that the teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process had various views expressed in different degrees of optimism regarding the impact of the process on their involvement in decision making processes. Some of the teachers

who were inclined to take the matter on positive grounds considered Edexcel accreditation as either a present or a future opportunity for them to be involved in the decision making processes more.

Edexcel Accreditation is an opportunity that helps staff to be involved in decision making. (Survey Part 3, N2)

Edexcel Accreditation gives an option for teachers to speak open minded[ly]. [It] [h]elps them to [be] involve[d] in decision making process. (Survey Part 3, N3)

I don't know in what way it will influence decision making processes. However, I believe that it would be a good model in that. (Survey Part 3, N4)

Yet again, among the not directly involved teacher population, there were some teachers who expressed their views in a negative direction. In this respect, the majority of this group highlighted that the 'accreditation' decision was rather 'top-down' or it was 'not a common goal', mainly reflecting the idea that they were not involved in the process using very similar expressions such as:

Top down: we were all informed of the procedures and we were given all the paper work. (Survey Part 3, N20)

It was made by the committee. (Survey Part 3, N21)

Only a few people were involved in the decision making process. (Survey Part 3 N23)

Teachers were not directly involved in the process. (Survey Part 3 N24)

Teachers were not involved in this process. (Survey Part 3 N27)

The decisions were made by the Leadership. (Survey Part 3 N28)

Similarly, some of the teachers in this group also expressed their negative views in the sense that the process did not have any impact on the Leadership's commitment to the teachers' involvement in the decision making processes.

I don't think anything has changed regarding "decision making". (Survey Part 3, N12)

This was meant to change but so far I have not seen any change. When teaching team (TT) meeting suggestions are considered this will become true. (Survey Part 3, N13)

People are not encouraged and guided on how to make changes. (Survey Part 3, N29)

The interview data provided some insights as regards the underlying reasons for some 'not directly involved teachers' doubtful attitudes towards the sincerity of the Leadership's intentions in teachers' involvement in decision making processes. In this respect, some teachers pointed out that the underlying reason could be the 'distance' between the teachers and the Leadership. In this respect, using a metaphor of 'ghosts', one of the teachers, for example, pointed out that due to the fact that the Leadership was not openly communicating their plans and intentions of 'involving people', teachers would at times be doubtful as regards the genuinity of the Leadership's intents in the creation of a caring and sharing atmosphere at the school. This, in turn, left some un-clarity in the teachers' minds as regards the degree of both parties' working towards a 'common goal':

Leadership is there and we're down here. So, do we really know what they're doing, and do they know what we're doing? That's why it comes down to 'what are they doing? How are they helping people?' It is a bit like they're ghosts up there and they're scary as well. Some people are scared of them. That's why, I'm not sure if we're both aware of each other [or whether or not] we are working towards the same thing. (N1)

From a slightly different perspective, another teacher also addressed the need for the Leadership to express their expectations more clearly in order to be more transparent:

I have an impression that rather than the teachers, it is the Leadership who are having difficulty in clearly expressing their expectations. This sometimes makes me wonder if they, themselves are blocking their own communication channels because they are worried that if they open too many channels it will affect their management. (N6)

4.3.3.3 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Experimentation'

The interview data also revealed that there was uncertainty among the teachers regarding the Leadership's attitude towards the teachers' commitment to change and development. Despite the fact that, in general, these insights were an indication of the teachers' un-clarity as regards the Leadership's sincerity in the treatment of the teachers' well-intended suggestions, they showed some differences in themselves. For some teachers, for example, their ideas were not treated seriously because they were not really listened to. One such teacher (N6), for instance, pointed out that especially when the Leadership used the term "based on your feedback" when introducing change, but not sharing the data to support what they were saying, caused her/him to question the transparency of the decisions at times. Also, for some teachers, the reason for feeling neglected was an understanding that the degree of acknowledgement or sincerity in the Leadership's treatment of an idea was

dependent on the degree of the alignment of the suggestion to the Leadership's perspective. In this sense, one teacher, for example said:

I've always been open and direct. And I've always expressed myself sometimes in written form, sometimes verbally, sometimes in formal situations or informal situations. But I think it [the acknowledgment of contributions] totally depends on the administration's point of view. If it sounds good to them, they might take it seriously. Sometimes somebody says something and you say "Ah, that sounds good". So you can apply it. But, if it doesn't sound good to you, no matter how valuable the feedback or opinion is, you just say "OK, next issue". So the approach is subjective a little bit. (N3)

Similarly, another teacher pointed out that, the main reason for some teachers to feel 'discouraged to question things' was because of the fact that no matter what they said, nothing 'changed' and they were left feeling frustrated:

Whatever we suggested, actually came back with no result. This is not only about the Leadership but all the other things. About 99% came back with no result. This makes me feel that I have to stop talking. I feel that I have to stop talking because nothing is changing. So you're just talking, getting angry and no solutions or results. (N5)

In similar veins, this teacher (N5) also pointed out that there were, in fact, two groups of people at the school whose 'commitment' orientations were different from each other:

Some people have a mission [and say] that "I have to go up in my school, I have to be in the Administration department. I have to do something else". I [on the other hand] just feel that I have to teach English. I'm a simple teacher and I'm doing my best. Teachers have a place in committees, like the Council. If they want, they can [be a part of it], but I don't want to. ... So, we can just put teachers into groups: the administration part, *really teaching** teachers, and teachers who are doing exams and the syllabus. (N5)

**Emphasis indicated in italics.*

Agreeing to the fact that there were different groups of people within the school, another teacher, however, took the matter from a rather different perspective:

There are different groups in the school, like the ones who want to contribute in the way of trying new things and the ones who just want to be safe, doing their job but not try new things. So they do care about their students, their teaching, but not about other things. And, [there are also] the ones who don't care about anything and see this [job] just as a way of making money or getting salary at the end of the month. (N4)

According to this teacher (N4), the main reason for the Leadership to 'approach' certain people when initiating new projects was because, even if they opened a post, no one else, but the people who would want to 'try new things' would apply for, and because it was 'common knowledge' 'who those people actually were', the Leadership would always approach those people. For this teacher, however, this was also another reason for some teachers to feel 'unappreciated' or 'unfairly overloaded' because they felt they were 'being punished for being committed to development or learning'.

4.3.3.4 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Transfer of Knowledge'

The qualitative data also showed that the not directly involved teachers thought that failures could not be discussed fruitfully in order to be perceived as opportunities for learning, and thus to lead to change and innovation at the school. Some of these insights were very similar to the ones gained on the 'experimentation' core component as there was an indication that the teachers had different reasons for being in agreement with the idea that failures could not be discussed constructively at the school. That is, for some teachers, the problem was the same as before; they were not listened to and there was a lack of empathy at the school:

Some of the ideas given in the TTMs [Teaching Team Meetings] are useful, but I think if you are a 20 hours teacher the administration really, really has to listen to your suggestions. Because you are the one who knows your students' needs best, and only we can suggest new solutions. If you only teach 4 hours or six hours, you're not aware of the problems in your classroom, the students' problems. You know nothing, you just see those students only 2 times a week. But if you are teaching five or four hours every day, you know what your students' needs are ... So, there is no empathy. (N5)

Yet again, some teachers, especially the ones who were either a team or a working group member, pointed out to an understanding that despite the fact that some of the criticism raised by the teachers was constructive, sometimes the teachers' reactions were 're-active' rather than 'pro-active', which did not provide the conditions for the ideas to be discussed fruitfully to lend themselves to solutions:

In general, I'm positive about the colleagues' participation, but there are some other things that make me unhappy, like ignorance and always criticizing, and never looking from the positive side of an argument. That kind of thing makes me unhappy ... Perhaps I prefer hearing more constructive feedback rather than just criticizing. (N3)

4.3.3.5 The Impact of Pearson Edexcel Accreditation Process on the Development of 'Teamwork and Group Problem Solving'

The interview data indicated that there was some positive feeling among a few of the not directly involved teachers as regards the impact of the accreditation process had on the encouragement of the teachers to solve problems together before discussing it with the Leadership. In this respect, for one of the teachers, for example, the Leadership was more committed to teachers' engagement in the decision making processes because more people in the middle management positions were trying to establish 'a common ground' among the teachers at the school by adopting a

combination of rational-empirical and normative-re-educative communication strategies. For this teacher, the influence of the Edexcel process was because it affected the degree of goal-oriented engagement among the people who were involved in middle management positions (teams) at the school:

I can say they [the Leadership] are trying *now** because they have got more people involved and because there is more of us. We are trying to win people over. I mean the people between administration and the teachers. We've got this 'trying to get them see the perspective' [approach] because some people are still very cautious and they are afraid of the Leadership and they feel there is something behind it. So, people in the middle are constantly trying to show them 'this is what we mean', 'this is what we want' and 'this is why we want it'. ...[This] could be because we got the Edexcel, we know what we should be working towards, let's say. It's given us some kind of guidelines. That's why the middle-management are more involved, and everyone's got a certain goal or aim, and is working towards something. (N1)

More specifically, according to this teacher, accreditation process triggered some changes towards the creation of an atmosphere where people were encouraged to self-reflect more. However, for this teacher, the school was at the very beginning of the road and still needed some time to progress towards collective goal-oriented practice because when the team members tried to disseminate this 'new' knowledge, they got reactions as some teachers felt threatened by it:

We've all had to change the way we think or the way we approach things. Therefore, we have changed a lot as well. We've developed in that sense...I think a lot of people have had to change, but we're still in the process of changing because this is something new. We're used to being told what to do and just do it. Right now it's not like that, and of course you can have an opinion but there's a way of doing it, guidelines for how to do 'self-reflection'. [But] it's new and it's quite scary for some people because they're threatened, you know. "You're going to know my weakness and what are you going to do with it?" There's that idea. So I'm not sure if they *don't* understand it or it's just about their comfort zone, let's say. Because some people, not the majority of people, feel that there's

inequality in the school. And because they feel this way, it's just and they're trying to give an opinion on something, and they feel like "OK, they're not listening to us. Inequality!" They feel that there's inequality in the school. (N1)

Yet again, according to this teacher, the developments in CPD, which was also triggered by accreditation process, was an indication of a hope that people of the school were encouraged to self-reflect by means of different channels, and this could lead to the establishment of an atmosphere where people would want to work collaboratively in teams more:

I think if we keep heading the way we're going, if we keep going this way, we're not going to have the problem of [no one] wants to be a team member because people are going to want to actually do it. So, we're not going to have that thing like whatever position it was, everyone needed to be approached. No one would come. Now these positions are becoming more rewarding. Well, I think it is [more rewarding]. I'm not sure about other people, but if they need to show that they're developing and they want to make it more concrete then, yes; a team is a better idea. And they would need to show that they're developing because CPD [Continuing Professional Development initiation] has had that impact right now. I'm not sure [about] the exact impact CPD has on people [or if] they want to show that they're developing. [But] They feel that they need to. (N1)

Similarly, another teacher pointed out that the accreditation process provided the means and highlighted the main responsibilities of the Leadership to the Leadership so as to eliminate the 'divide' and keep the motivation alive at the school. In this respect, according to this teacher, the Leadership needed to be more in tune with the teachers and provide more feedback on the areas they needed to develop themselves as well as their strengths:

We got this accreditation. What does that mean? That means we have to move on. We can't stay like this. We have to improve ourselves. What does that [improve ourselves] mean? That means that they [the

Leadership] should monitor more. They should look at what's going on more. So, the administration, in general, are not in tune. Sometimes I feel they don't know what's going on. They should monitor what's going on. They should check what we've been doing. That's how I feel. After checking, give feedback. Guide us. "This is right. You're going on the right track. This is fine but you've got this problem. You have to improve yourself. Do it like this" I don't know. So, there is no feedback coming from the Leadership. They should be more involved. ... We have this accreditation. That means, the Leadership and the school, they can't leave me alone. They have to support me if I want to support myself. (N2)

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the results and implications of the study will be discussed in the light of the relevant literature and the identified artefacts of the school. In the last section of the chapter some possible avenues for future research will be presented.

5.1 Discussion and Implications

Quality management and assurance processes, internal or external, have both performance evaluation/control and development orientations. The question is ‘how’ to strike such a balance between these two seemingly incompatible ideas that in the accomplishment of the objectives or fulfilment of the accountabilities the fine line between routinization and dynamicity is drawn, and the quality assured entities, be it an institution or a person, keep learning and developing themselves. The literature considerations, particularly that provided by Ehlers (2009), Goh (2003) and Tam (1999), indicate that the key to drawing this fine line lies in the ‘empowerment of the parties’ and so, ensuring a coherent integration of top-down and bottom-up applications. This, in turn, leads to a realization that the intricacies of this sophisticated phenomenon can, in fact, be explored from a variety of angles, especially when all the parties involved in the process are considered as potential ‘change agents’ or ‘enablers of learning’.

In this respect, elaborating on such notions as ‘change’, ‘becoming change agents’, ‘internal quality assurance practices as potential change agents’, ‘learning organizations’, ‘core building blocks of a learning organization’ and ‘external quality assurance processes as potential change agents’, this descriptive case study explored the perceived impact of Pearson Edexcel accreditation process on the development of core building blocks of a learning organization at EMU EPS. In doing so, it framed both the external and the internal quality assurance processes as learning-oriented potential change agents.

- **Can external quality assurance processes be considered as empowering change agents?**

In the literature, especially the external quality assurance schemes are often associated with the ‘fitness for purpose’ aspect of quality (Sarrico, Rosa, Teixeira & Cardoso, 2010; Thomas 2003). Therefore, they are identified with such notions as ‘quality control’ (Heyworth, 2013) or even a ‘test’ (Ezer & Horin, 2013). However, it is also possible to encounter such arguments which focus on the idea of ‘fitness of purpose’ (i.e., genuine intentions as regards the improvement of quality) (Sarrico, Rosa, Teixeira & Cardoso, 2010; Thomas 2003). This, in turn, makes it possible to relate the alignment of a ‘change agent’ or a ‘control mechanism’ characteristic of a quality assurance system either to the intentions of the educational institutions themselves (Sarrico, Rosa, Teixeira & Cardoso, 2010; Thomas 2003) or to the intentions of the quality assurance agencies (Harvey & Newton, 2004), and even in some cases to the scope of the quality indicators (Gynnild, 2007; Tam 2001).

When the ‘fitness of purpose’ perspective is adopted for the consideration of the actions of an external quality assurance agency, it should be seen that the premise upon which the agency verifies ‘whether the institutions are doing what they claim to be doing against generically formulated pre-defined criteria’ (Cheng & Tam, 1997, Thomas, 2003), provides the grounds for an understanding that the intent is ‘the provision of flexibility to the education institutions within a framework’. In addition, irrespective of the duration of the site visit, the fact that external quality assurance schemes base their decisions on the data provided by the education institutions, and that their schemes involve such practices as institutional self-reflection (Heyworth, 2013), makes it possible to consider the process as a potential ‘awareness-raising activity which can lead to the empowerment of the institutions’. Finally, the fact that the verification process is ongoing/cyclic/systematic, and that it involves feedback as well as follow-up elements (Dill, 2000; Lejeune, 2011), makes it possible to consider it as ‘quality-enhancement’ and dynamicity rather than control and standardization oriented activity.

Among many other possible consequences which can open up different research avenues, these considerations bring forth an understanding that if and when efficiently and genuinely applied, an external quality assurance process fosters institutional self-efficacy, but in the meantime, it scaffolds the institutions’ quality initiations by means of its quality indicators which provide a framework of ‘good practice’. Therefore, when an external quality assurance practice is stimulated by the institutions which have genuine intention of developing or already well-established internal quality management and assurance systems, it can be considered as a self-

initiated learning or ‘transfer of knowledge’ practice (Dill, 1999; Ng, 2008; O’Mahony & Garavan, 2012). Figure 5.1 summarizes the interrelated nature of internal and external quality assurance schemes from the ‘fitness of purpose’ perspective.



Figure 5.1: The interrelatedness of internal and external quality assurance schemes from the ‘fitness of purpose’ perspective

- **Can internal quality assurance processes be considered as empowering change agents?**

When the internal quality assurance practices are also considered from a similar window, it is possible to understand that especially the framework of a learning organization provided by Goh (1998, 2003) reflects a similar pattern of a quality assurance system applied within an educational organization. Accordingly, when the

‘fitness of purpose’ perspective is adopted for the consideration of the practices involved in an internal quality assurance scheme, the premise is that the vision and the mission along with the policies and procedures of an educational organization provide the framework of ‘good practice’ within an institution (Woodhouse, 1999). Therefore, the main role of the managerial practices and organizational processes entails:

- a. clear articulation of the measures of success (i.e., good practice) to the individuals in order to establish a common understanding of the commitments of the institution as well as the individuals’ roles in the achievement of institution’s goals,
- b. the provision of flexibility to the individuals to reflect on what they claim to be doing against the institution’s framework of good practice, by encouraging
 - i. risk-taking and trying ‘new ideas’,
 - ii. a constructive-critical approach to the resolution of individual as well as collective difficulties, and thus,
 - iii. individuals’ contribution and involvement in decision making processes,
- c. ensuring the transparency and fairness of the decision making processes by applying a systematic and ongoing ‘whole school’ approach to data collection and monitoring processes, and based on this,
- d. acknowledging the individual as well as the collective efforts by providing feedback , and finally,
- e. consistently applying these practices in order to ensure the ‘empowerment’ of the individuals as well as the institution (Goh, 1998, 2003).

Therefore, when an internal quality assurance practice is driven by the collective actions of the individuals who have the intention of continuous development and learning, the problem solving and decision making processes are aligned with self-initiated learning or ‘transfer of knowledge’ practices. Figure 5.2 summarizes the interrelatedness of organizational processes and managerial practices and individuals’ actions from the ‘fitness of purpose’ perspective.



Figure 5.2: The interrelatedness of internal quality assurance schemes and the individuals’ actions from the ‘fitness of purpose’ perspective

- **How did the participants perceive the core components of a learning organization? What was the perceived impact of Pearson Edexcel Assured accreditation process on the development of core building blocks of a learning organization at EMU EPS?**

When the EPS academic staff's overall perceptions are considered in accordance with the framework of a learning organization provided by Goh (1998, 2003), it is seen that the EPS academic staff were not sure as regards 'clarity of purpose and mission' and 'shared leadership and involvement' core components while they slightly agreed with 'experimentation', 'transfer of knowledge' and 'teamwork and group problem-solving' core components of a learning organization. Accordingly, it is possible to say that these results clearly indicate the need for the establishment of a school-wide common understanding of the commitments of the school as well as the teachers' roles in the achievement of the schools goals, and for the provision of opportunities to the teachers to reflect on what they claim to be doing against the school's framework of good practice, by particularly encouraging their contribution and involvement in decision making processes. However, particularly the consideration of the perspectives of the different internal stakeholders in the light of the school's framework of good practice, which is publically shared by means of the school's vision, values and mission statements provides further in-depth insights into these results as well as the impact of the accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization.

On the school's website, the school's vision reads as:

The EMU School of Foreign Languages aims to *be a regional leader in language education and training**. We will *continue to develop* highest part-time and full-time *courses, not only for EMU students, but for the wider community, locally and internationally*. We hope to *be recognized for our genuine dedication to student development and support*, and for providing *language courses* that directly help our students towards *success in their academic and professional futures*. (<http://sfl.emu.edu.tr/about.html>, n.d)

**Emphasis added by means of italics.*

Likewise, the mission statement, which stands as the school's steps towards the envisioned future, reads as:

At the EMU School of Foreign Languages, we provide *high quality international language education** in a *modern and dynamic learning environment*. In line with this:

- i. We *continually update* our courses to meet your *needs in a fast changing world*.
- ii. We *help you prepare for* both your academic and professional *future*.
- iii. We offer you *internationally recognized language qualifications* which will help you in your future career.
- iv. We *provide* a wide range of *extra educational, social and cultural support* to help you benefit from your stay with us. (<http://sfl.emu.edu.tr/about.html>, n.d)

**Emphasis added by means of italics.*

Finally, the values which are embedded in the vision and mission are explicitly expressed in the school's values statement as:

At the EMU FLEPS, we are a *team** of *highly qualified professionals dedicated to helping our students improve their language skills* to the highest level. We believe that *learning takes place through many different activities*, both inside and outside the classroom. With this in mind, we aim to *be more than just a school, but a home and a family that will welcome our students and help them make friends from all around the world*. (<http://sfl.emu.edu.tr/about.html>, n.d)

**Emphasis added by means of italics.*

Considering the highlighted phrases in the vision, mission and the values statements of the school, it should be understood that the underlying principle which leads to these premises is ‘commitment to continuous learning and development in a collaborative environment’. That is, in these statements, it is clearly stated that the school’s main commitment is the empowerment of its students. However, there is also an understanding embedded within these statements that shows that the school believes that the key to the ‘empowerment of its students’ lies in the school’s empowerment of itself, which involves ‘empowerment of all the individuals within the school’.

This understanding alone should lead to a conclusion that Pearson Edexcel accreditation process was considered as a ‘transfer of knowledge’ activity (along with meeting the ‘recognition’ aspect of the mission and vision), especially by the Leadership team of the school. More specifically, it should be concluded that for the Leadership team, the main concern is the establishment of an effective and efficient ‘internal’ quality management and assurance systems, and Edexcel assured was considered as an objective means for the diagnosis of ‘the whereabouts’ of the school in this sense. This is, also, evidenced particularly by the fact that during the interviews, the team’s keen focus was on the need for further revisions either in the school structures or the strategies they needed to utilize in order to take the school forward together with the teachers. What is more, in all these discussions the Pearson Edexcel Accreditation process’ impact was mainly highlighted as:

1. the re-assurance of the need for the revival of professional development at the school, and

2. the Edexcel-triggered institutional self-study exercise which was hoped to lead to the dissemination of knowledge, and thus, a school-wide awakening.

When these results obtained from the Leadership team are considered in the light of the studies in the relevant literature, it can be said that in a manner of supporting Dill (1999), O'Mahony and Garavan (2012) and Rosa, Tavares and Amaral's (2006) study results, these results also indicated that the management of the school considered the Edexcel accreditation process as a 'transfer of knowledge' exercise or a contributing factor to development of systematic decision-making processes at the school.

However, contrary to the results of the Ezer and Horin (2013), Ng (2008), Lejeune (2011) studies, these results also indicated that the Edexcel-triggered institutional self-study exercise did not have much impact on the Leadership team as they had already been aware of their facilitative roles in encouraging the staff's commitment to the school's accomplishment of its mission and vision, and thus, they had already been applying the reflective practice themselves in order to develop well-grounded strategies to establish a coherent and systematic link between bottom-up and top-down processes. More specifically, considering such context specific challenges as the absence of a school-wide common understanding of the school's commitments, trust and incentives to facilitate the teachers' goal oriented reflective practice, the Leadership team highlighted:

1. the need for the development of communication strategies on their part in order to establish a common understanding of the commitments of the school as well as the teachers' roles in the achievement of school's goals, and
2. the need for developments in the area of internal quality management and assurance systems in order to re-establish the dynamicity of learning at the school.

Based on this, the team pointed out to the potentially facilitative roles of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and systematic data collection initiatives in the accomplishment of a transparent and collaborative learning environment where the problems could be addressed constructively and considered as opportunities for learning by all the parties involved in the teaching, learning and assessment processes of the school.

Accordingly, when considered in the light of the relevant learning organizations and ELT literature, it is possible to draw parallels between these results and scholars' emphasis on the adoption of systems, rational-empirical and normative-re-educative approaches to change management at language schools (Goh, 1998, 2003; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Particularly the prominence given to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiative by the Leadership team is an indication of their action-oriented perspective to the creation of the conditions to facilitate teachers' empowerment, and thus, their involvement in decision making processes as well as the school's identification of their developmental needs particularly as regards what goes on in the classroom (Heyworth, 2013; Muresan et al., 2007; Muresan, 2009; Pickering, 1999; Underhill, 2004).

As for the EPS teachers who were involved in the study it was possible to observe view differences as regards the core components of a learning organization as well as the impact of Edexcel-triggered institutional self-reflection exercise on the development of these components among them. As the individuals who were directly involved in the process, for the Accreditation Advisory Board members, it was possible to observe that their stance towards the core components of a learning organization was mostly similar to that of the Leadership team. More specifically, for the Advisory Board members the main concern was the establishment of an effective and efficient internal quality management and assurance system, as well. This was evidenced by the fact that during the interviews, in one way or another, the Advisory Board members' focus was on:

1. the need for the development of a common understanding of the school's vision and mission,
2. the role of professional development in the provision of flexibility to the individuals to reflect on what they claim to be doing against the institution's framework of good practice, and thus, in their as well as the institution's 'empowerment',
3. the role of a systematic and ongoing 'whole school' approach to data collection and monitoring processes in order to ensure the coherence, transparency and fairness of the decision making processes, and
4. their as well as the Leadership's role in the dissemination of 'this' knowledge.

However, despite being to a slight extent the Board members also had different views among themselves regarding the impact of the accreditation process on the development of the core components of a learning organization. In this respect, while one of the members highlighted that particularly the Edexcel-triggered institutional self-reflection exercise acted as an ‘eye-opener’ on her/his part particularly as regards the role of systematic approach to data collection in the provision of transparent means for decision making, another Board member pointed out to the process’s impact as the re-assurance of the need for the revival of professional development at the school. However still, when the Board members’ overall attitudes towards the accreditation process is considered in the light of the relevant literature, it is possible to say that in a manner of supporting Cardoso, Rosa and Santos’s (2013) study results, Advisory Board members’ direct involvement in the process may have led to their perception of the process as improvement rather than conformance-oriented practice, and thus, may have had some impact on their positive attitudes towards it.

As for the teachers who were not directly involved in the accreditation process, it can be said that there were significant view differences between the Leadership team and this group of teachers particularly as regards ‘shared leadership and involvement’ core component. More specifically, as revealed by the interview results, among the members of this group, ‘communication’ and ‘mutual trust’ between the Leadership team and EPS teachers were the main concerns. That is, as verified by these teachers’ accounts, the not directly involved teachers’ were uncertain of the presence of a fair, dialogical and collaborative atmosphere at the school and of the Leadership’s degree

of recognition of their contributions and risk-taking because in many cases they displayed their un-clarity about the sincerity of the intent by simply commenting on the ‘distance’ between the Leadership and the teachers, questioning the ‘transparency’ of the Leadership’s expectations of them, and complaining about the Leadership’s not listening to them and the feeling of being ‘neglected’. However, in addition to this observation, when these teachers’ overall perceptions were considered it was also possible to observe that, among the teachers in this group, there were also divergent views in terms of the way they perceived:

1. the commitments of the school and their roles in the accomplishment of the school’s goals,
2. their degree of openness and willingness to try ‘new ideas’ among themselves,
3. their degree of adoption of a constructive-critical approach to problem-solution and involvement in decision making processes among themselves,
4. the degree of the transparency and fairness of the decision making processes at the school, and
5. the degree of developmental impact the accreditation process had on the school.

More specifically, there was also ‘a divide’ among these teachers themselves which at some points showed itself in such remarks as “really teaching teachers” versus teachers who feel that they “have to be in the administration department” and “do something else” or “teachers who want to try new things” versus “teachers who just see this [job] as a way of getting salary” or “there is more of us than them”. Hence,

when the qualitative data gathered from this group was considered as a whole, it was possible to observe that while some of the not directly involved teachers believed that there was inequality at the school in terms of the Leadership's acknowledgment of teachers' contributions, some others believed that they needed the Leadership's support more in order to be able to establish a common ground among themselves. Accordingly, despite being limited to only those teachers who were involved in the study, it was also possible to observe a "spin-off impact" of the accreditation process especially among the interviewed teachers who were either a team or a working group member. More specifically, it was mainly according to these teachers that accreditation process may have had some impact on the school's establishment of the firm-grounds for its goal-oriented development as well as the individuals' encouragement to self-reflect and collaborate more.

Consequently, these results can be considered as an indication of the already identified gaps by the Leadership team and the Accreditation Advisory Board members as regards the need for the development of a common understanding of the school's vision and mission and the need for revisions in the school structures and the strategies in order to encourage goal-oriented reflective practice among the teacher population. Therefore, drawing parallels between Ng (2008) and Ezer and Horin (2013) studies' conclusions and the development of internal quality assurance processes at the school, two of the conclusions which can be taken from these observations are:

1. time is needed to observe the impact of the strategies which Leadership put forth to gain the teachers' hearts and minds as well as to establish a common

understanding of the school's commitments to lead to a school-wide goal-oriented reflective practice, and

2. time is needed to observe the impact of the continuing professional development initiative on the degree of individuals' reflection on what they claim to be doing against the institution's framework of good practice.

However, in addition to these conclusions, the presence of the 'divide' among the teacher population itself can also lead to a deduction that there is also a need for the utilization of more formal means for the articulation of 'code of conduct' as well as for the facilitation of the establishment of transparency of 'acknowledgement' at the school not only between the teachers and the Leadership, but also among the teachers themselves. In this respect, based on the discussions of especially Heyworth (2013) and Pickering (1999), it can be concluded that an 'appraisal system' would support establishment of an internal quality assurance scheme as well as the CPD initiative by encouraging the 'collective' actions of the individuals by aligning the problem solving and decision making processes to self-initiated learning or 'transfer of knowledge' practices.

5.2 Implications for Further Research

These conclusions lead to various avenues for future research around the notions of 'leaders as change agents' (Hoff, 1999), 'teachers as leaders' (Barth, 2001), 'teachers as change agents' (Fullan, 1993). First of all, a longitudinal study can provide further insights into the perceived impact of the managerial strategies put forth by the Leadership team on the establishment of a quality culture within the school. Secondly, another longitudinal study can provide further insights into the impact of

the continuing professional development initiative on the teachers 'empowerment'. Thirdly, a narrower perspective can be adopted and 'in the classroom' applications of the teachers' empowerment can be focused on in another study. Also, another longitudinal descriptive case study can explore the impact of all these developments on the students' actual learning, which in a way, focus on the idea of 'learners as change agents' and 'learners as leaders'. In addition, another study can integrate the Modern Languages Division of the school and consider the impact of the Pearson Edexcel Accreditation process on the development core components of a learning organization from the 'whole' school perspective. Furthermore, further case studies in other contexts can also provide a wider perspective to the impact of external quality assurance systems on the development of internal quality assurance systems at language schools. Finally, additional studies can focus on the link between 'involvement' and 'establishment of a common ground' and the role of external assurance in the development of these notions at language schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Survey

THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION SURVEY*

CONFIDENTIAL WHEN COMPLETED

Dear participant,

This survey is composed of three parts. Part I involves “*The Learning Organization Survey*”. The purpose of this part is to gather information concerning organizational factors and management practices that may influence the learning capability of organizations. Part II involves questions related to your personal work experience. Part III aims to gather your comments on the relationship between Edexcel accreditation process and some processes at EMU English Preparatory School.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please reflect carefully and answer all questions as honestly as possible based upon your knowledge of the EMU English Preparatory School. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be aggregated with other responses so individual respondents cannot be identified.

Some questions in this survey might sound similar to others. Please answer ALL of the questions.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Inst. Seren Başor Reynolds

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This survey instrument cannot be used in any form without the permission of the copyright holder.

CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN RESEARCH

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent to serve as a participant in this survey. I understand the purpose of this survey and have had opportunities to ask any questions I have. I also understand that my responses to the survey will be kept confidential and my right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected.

Signature:

Date:

THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION SURVEY*

PART I

Instructions: In the optic answer sheet, please respond by blackening the option (A-G**) that most closely corresponds to how you feel about each statement.

****A: strongly disagree B: moderately disagree C: slightly disagree D: not sure**

E: slightly agree F: moderately agree G: strongly agree

| | strongly disagree | moderately disagree | slightly disagree | not sure | slightly agree | moderately agree | strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. I often have an opportunity to talk to other colleagues at EPS about successful practices or work activities in order to understand why they succeed. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 2. There is widespread support and acceptance for the school's vision statement. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 3. I can often bring new ideas into the school. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 4. Failures regarding the system, learning, teaching and assessment activities are constructively discussed in our school. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 5. Current organizational practice encourages teachers to solve problems together before discussing it with the Leadership***. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 6. From my experience, people who are new to this school are encouraged to question the way things are done. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 7. The Leadership of this school resists change and is afraid of new ideas. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 8. The Leadership of this school encourages teachers to experiment**** new solutions in order to improve work related processes. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 9. New work related processes that may be useful to the school as a whole are usually shared with all teachers. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 10. Practical innovative ideas to improve work related processes are often acknowledged by the Leadership. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 11. The Leadership and teachers in this school share a common vision of what our work should accomplish. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 12. In my experience, new ideas from teachers are not treated seriously by the Leadership. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |

| | strongly disagree | moderately disagree | slightly disagree | not sure | slightly agree | moderately agree | strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 13. The Leadership of this school frequently involves teachers in important decisions. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 14. Teachers can usually form informal groups to solve work-related problems. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 15. The Leadership of this school can accept criticism without becoming overly defensive. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 16. We have a system that allows us to learn successful practices from other schools. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 17. The Leadership of this school often provides feedback regarding the system, learning, teaching and assessment activities that helps to identify potential problems and opportunities. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 18. I understand how the vision of this school is to be achieved. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 19. We have opportunities for self-assessment with respect to goal attainment. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 20. The school's vision statement identifies values to which all teachers are expected to conform. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 21. Most problem solving groups (e.g., Teaching Teams, Working Groups, Curriculum Development Committee) in this school involve teachers from a variety of functional areas or divisions. | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |

*****The Leadership = The Director and the Assistant Directors**

******experiment = e.g., action research**

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PART II

Instructions: This section asks for personal data related to your work experience. Please respond by blackening the option that most closely corresponds to you in the optic answer sheet.

22. How long have you worked at EMU English Preparatory School / FLEPS?
A) 0-5 years B) 6-10 years C) 11-15 years D) 16-20 years E) 21-25 years F) 26-30 years

23. What is your current work status at EMU English Preparatory School?
A) Part time Instructor B) Full time Instructor C) Senior Instructor D) Other

24. Do you hold any extra-responsibility positions?
A) Yes B) No

25. If yes, please choose the option that most closely corresponds to you.

- A) Team member
- B) Working Group member
- C) Coordinator
- D) Coordinator and an Advisory Board member
- E) Leadership member

PART III

Instructions: How would you relate the Edexcel accreditation process to the following processes at EPS?

- 1. Development of a common goal:
.....
.....
.....
- 2. Involvement in decision making:
.....
.....
.....
- 3. Innovation:
.....
.....
.....
- 4. Communication:
.....
.....
.....
- 5. Collaboration:
.....
.....
.....
- 6. Problem-solving:
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. ☺

Appendix B: Correspondence with Professor Goh

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: right;">11/27/2013</p> <p>Dear Professor Goh,</p> <p>I am pursuing my MA in ELT Management. I discovered your 1997 article in the European Management Journal on learning capabilities of organizations, and it inspired me a lot. I was about to ask for your permission to use the survey as a tool for my thesis study when I discovered that Diane Neefe used an updated version of the survey in her MS project study in 2001.</p> <p>I would very much like to obtain the latest version of the survey and have your permission to use it as a tool for my thesis study as well.</p> <p>Thank you for consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.</p> <p>Sincerely, Seren Başor Reynolds MA candidate Eastern Mediterranean University North Cyprus</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">12/2/2013</p> <p>Hi Seren,</p> <p>Thank you for your interest in my OL survey. Attached is the survey and scoring key for the 21 items.</p> <p>The survey is to be used only for your thesis research and not to be shared with anyone else without my expressed permission.</p> <p>If you can provide me your raw data once collected it would be useful for my further research in OL. You can send it to me in an EXCEL file. Also please send me the name and contact information of your thesis supervisor.</p> <p>Good luck on your thesis research.</p> <p>Professor Goh</p> <p>Swee Chua Goh, MBA, PhD Professor Emeritus in Organizational Behaviour Telfer School of Management University of Ottawa 55 Laurier Ave East, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5 Canada Tel: 613-562-5800 X4743 E-mail: goh@telfer.management.ca</p> |
|---|---|

12/7/2013

Dear Professor Goh,

Thank you for letting me use your survey for my thesis study. I can gladly share the raw data (in an EXCEL file) with you as soon as I collect it. Before that, however, I need to ask for your permission once again for the following:

1. Can I replace some of the expressions in your survey with the ones which are commonly used in the context where I am going to conduct the study? E.g., staff-teachers, institution-school.
2. I am planning to collect the responses on optic answer sheets. So, can I revise the instructions accordingly?

I have attached the copy of the survey with these revisions. (All the revisions are highlighted in yellow.) I have also added my thesis supervisor's contact details below.

Prof. Dr. Ulker Vanci Osam
English Language Teaching (ELT) Department
Faculty of Education
Eastern Mediterranean University
Famagusta, North Cyprus
Tel: [+90 392 630 1552](tel:+903926301552)
E-mail: ulker.osam@emu.edu.tr

Thank you once more for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Seren Başor Reynolds
MA candidate
Eastern Mediterranean University
North Cyprus

12/9/2013

Hi Seren,

I am OK with the changes that you have mentioned to the survey before use.

One concern I have is the reference to the director and assistant directors under the response to leadership in the survey. You may not get clear responses due to the reference to two different sets of people. You may want to think about it.

God luck on your survey and hope to see some of your results.

Regards,
Prof Goh

Swee Chua Goh, MBA, PhD
Professor Emeritus in Organizational Behaviour
Telfer School of Management
University of Ottawa
55 Laurier Ave East, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Canada
Tel: [613-562-5800](tel:613-562-5800) X4743
E-mail: goh@telfer.management.ca

2/22/2014

Dear Professor Goh,

Thank you again for giving me the permission to use your OL survey. I have just had the chance to collect & enter the data and so, to send you the raw data in an excel file (attached). Also attached is the (revised-for-research-context version of) OL survey.

Once more thank you very much,

Sincerely
Seren B. R.
MA Candidate
EMU, North Cyprus

Appendix C: The Interview Guide

Moves

1. **Background of the study** (Accreditation – impact on the development of our institution and on us personally)
2. **Why /important?** (discover where we are & provide insights into what else can be done to develop our institution as well as ourselves.)
3. **Who am I?** (A keen learner – will ask a few questions to be able to draw a thorough & unbiased picture -- So --your insight is crucial (as a leadership member/ AdBoard member / teacher of the school).
4. **Why you?** (Need to gather the insights of Leadership, Adboard and Teachers to draw a thorough & unbiased picture -- you are in one of the key positions at the school – and your opinions & experiences can give me some rich data to draw an unbiased picture. -- I am going to interview a few other people in the same position as you are)
5. **How long?** (about 40-45 minutes)
6. **During the interview:** (I - some notes & record the interview to revise my notes later)
7. **Confidentiality:** (pseudo names).
8. **Give the consent form (See the form below)**
9. **Any Questions before we start?**
10. **Some factual information about you (See the form below)**
11. **Questions**

The Consent Form

| |
|--|
| INTERVIWEE _____ |
| CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN RESEARCH |
| <p>I understand that by participating in this interview, I am giving my informed consent to serve as a participant in this survey. I understand the purpose of this survey and have had opportunities to ask any questions I have. I also understand that my responses to the survey will be kept confidential and my right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected.</p> |
| Date: _____ |

Factual Data Sheet

| |
|--|
| INTERVIWEE _____ |
| How long have you taught at EPS/FLEPS? |
| What position are you holding at the school? |
| What is your Academic status? |

Questions & Probes

- Where do you see the prep. school in achieving its mission and vision? / Before accreditation?
 - How/relate your role with the mission of the school? / Before accreditation?
 - your contribution to the achievement of the mission?
 - Tell me about the Leadership's role in the teachers' involvement in the institutional development. / Before accreditation?
 - suggest solutions to problems, new ideas for the achievement of the mission
 - the leadership's acknowledgement
 - How/relate (your own) professional development with institutional development?
 - (TO THE LEADERSHIP MEMBERS ONLY!!) How about the teachers' professional development with respect to institutional development? / Before accreditation?
 - The Leadership's role in this area / support from the leadership
 - Formal groups at the school -- teachers / provide solutions to problems, new ideas in these? / Before accreditation?
 - suggestions -- contribute to the development of the institution?
 - to your own professional development?
 - to their own professional development?
-
- Would you like to add any further comments?

Appendix D: Application to the FLEPS Administration

To: Assist. Prof. Dr. Nilgün Hancıoğlu Eldridge
The Director, EMU FLEPS

From: Seren Başor Reynolds,
Instructor and M.A. Candidate

Date: 26. 12. 2013

I am writing to request permission to collect data for my thesis research study titled “Will the Ripples Become Waves? The Impact of Accreditation Process on an English Language School”. The research will be conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam.

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of the accreditation process on the development of the processes at EMU English Preparatory School which facilitate the establishment and maintenance of a “learning organization” (Garvin, 1993). The data collection involves a survey (please see attached), semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

I am planning to administer the survey to the Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS) Leadership, the FLEPS Accreditation Advisory Board members and the academic staff at English Preparatory School (EPS). Then, I am going to conduct semi-structured interviews with the Leadership, Advisory Board members and a smaller group of academic staff (about 10 teachers). The interview questions are going to be based on the results of the survey. In line with this, I am planning to analyze the policy and process documents and the strategic plan currently implemented at the School.

I would like to confirm that the data collected will be used for research purposes only and be kept confidential.

I would be grateful if you could grant me permission to collect data from the FLEPS Leadership, Accreditation Advisory Board members and the teachers at their convenience. The EMU FLEPS research request form is attached

Yours sincerely,

Seren Başor Reynolds
M.A. Candidate
Student Number: 105316
Phone: (0533) 875 18 68
E-mail: seren.reynolds@emu.edu.tr

Attachments: 1) The Learning Organization Survey
2) The EMU FLEPS Research Request Form



Eastern Mediterranean University

Foreign Languages & English Preparatory School

Research Request Form

Please fill in the form below and attach the necessary documentation (e.g. cover letter, sample questionnaire). NB. All documentation should be error free.

Name: Seren Başor Reynolds

Contact no: (0533) 875 18 68
seren.reynolds@emu.edu.tr

Email:

Institution / Dept: EMU EPS
Vancı Osam

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ülker

Title of Research: Will the Ripples Become Waves? The Impact of Accreditation Process on a Language School

Proposed period of research (to be checked against the Academic Calendar): January-March 2014

Research to be carried out in:

English Preparatory School Modern Languages Division both(English taught at Dept. Level)

Research to be carried out with:

teachers students both other (*please specify*): The EMU FLEPS Leadership

Level of students:

beginners elementary pre-intermediate intermediate
 other (*please specify*) _____

No. of teachers required: ALL **No. of students required:** NONE

Research to be carried out by (indicate in parenthesis specific dates for data collection):

online questionnaire (.....) paper based questionnaire (January 2014)
 interview (February-March 2014) classroom observation (.....)
 other (*please specify*) Document analysis (January – March 2014)

Aim(s) of Research:

thesis (masters) thesis (PhD) conference presentation
 other (*please specify*) _____

Any other relevant information:

Upon completion of my research, I agree to submit a copy of my findings to the FLEPS administration and do a presentation if requested. I understand the administration have the right to intervene at any time during my research period and that any further requests on my behalf may not be accepted if I violate the code of conduct and ethics of research.

Date: 24/12/2013

Signature

To be completed by the FLEPS Administration

Approved Disapproved (reason):

Comments:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix E: A Sample Interview Script with one of the Directly

Involved Teachers (henceforth D2)

Interviewer: Hello, as I told you before, I'm doing my thesis on accreditation and its impact on our school's development

D2: And when we say 'our school', we mean...?

Interviewer: EPS's development ... I'm taking EPS as a unique part of FLEPS in this study which is also the limitation of the study ...but then again possible because it is more centralized ... and also I will be looking at its impact ... accreditation's impact on our development ... people being part of the school ... while we're doing the interview, please consider me as a keen learner (*laughter*) because I don't have much experience with research, to be honest with you but I am very much interested in learning.

D2: I know that

Interviewer: ..and of course as a person working here I have some experiences of ... and opinions about the topic itself ... but the whole point of the study is to have a thorough picture of the phenomenon and I need to get different stakeholder's perceptions on this. That's why you as an Advisory Board member, your insights are very, very valuable.....I will be interviewing other people as well ... em ... so what I was going to say ... it's going to take approximately 40 minutes ... it may take longer ... but the results of this interview ... I'm not going to ... of course ... share ... your name with anyone ... I'm going to use pseudonyms in the study ... when I'm sharing the results of the study ... so it's confidential ... I can guarantee that ...

D2: Thank you...thank you.

Interviewer: And...what else...?....I'm hoping that the results of the study will help me finish my thesis...first that, of course ...but also our school...maybe we can get some further insights into the matter...and ..see

D2: I think we need that....yes...

Interviewer: ...what else can be done. OK, do you have any questions before we start?

D2: Are we talking about accreditation as ... the Edexcel accreditation here ... limited to the Edexcel accreditation...

Interviewer: Not necessarily....not necessarily...

D2: We can go beyond...and

Interviewer: And we can go back...

D2: ..Or we do ... into the future as well ... ok.... ok.

Interviewer: OK. Let me give you this consent form....

D2: And today is ... is it the 15th or 16th ... the 16th ... if I'm wrong, we've moved into the future ...

Interviewer: So, let's start with some factual information...how long have you taught at FLEPS?

D2: Emmm. Long time ... 25 years ... since 1989

Interviewer: And ... at the moment you are holding a position of...coordinator of....

D2: Continuing Professional Development

Interviewer: So, you are a member of the Advisory Board...?

D2: I'm a member of the Advisory Board ... also Curriculum Development Committee...also...council.....member of the council...as an exam coordinator...

Interviewer: OK, thank you...and what is your academic status?

D2: I'm a Senior Instructor

Interviewer: ..OK. This was the difficult part ... *(laughter)* ... OK ... let's start ... where do you see Prep School in achieving its mission and vision?

D2: On the right track....on the right track...em.....em....Prep School is...the current Prep School's positionhas concerns about ... the quality ... and making it ... a vision shared by ... eh ... the whole staff...including, of course, the higher administration...I think, in that respect, we're on the right track..

Interviewer: Where do you see....how do you relate your role with respect to the achievement of the school's mission?

D2: ..Em...regarding my position as a member ... or coordinator of the Continuing Professional Development ... not only my role ... but as a team ... or as ... our mission and vision ... em ... it's quite crucial...in terms of the school achieving its aims...both day-to-day

running of the school and ...things like accreditation ... external accreditation ... and also internal accreditation as well ... I mean ... em....in our school we have gone through stages of very rigorous and vigorous training periods ...it was a kind of a ... compulsory ... I mean it was seen or perceived as compulsory ... say ... if we went back to...20..15 years...in time ... most of the teachers had to go through ... on their first year ... go through a new teacher's course ... followed by COTE and then Cambridge Axel course and some chose to continue with DOTE ... and some continued with their master's and even Ph.Ds ..So until a certain point ... an optimum point ... em ... it was a kind of ... eh...highlyeh...active institution....and when I worked as an administrator..... I worked as Assistant Director for four years...and finally as the Director....at job interviews when I asked them..."Why do you want to work here?" Most of the answers were around ...em...."Because we know that we can improve ourselves in many areas...because you have a distinct opportunity"...they were referring to the teacher training...the training opportunities. So this is a quite crucial area...but unfortunately after...a decline period...and when...some 50 of our colleagues became...were made redundant...we had a sort of hibernation period butEm ... especially the current leadership ... especially the director herself ... comes from eh ... a training ... teacher-training background ... we decided to ... a kind of revival of professional development...so...eh...well....I mean this isn't just ... eh...one person or two people's idea but also ... this was indicated in ... eh ... the accreditation for ... eh ... pre-accreditation visiting ... for EAQUALS ... in 2008....at the pre-inspection visit...so it was pointed out there as well....among some other things...so again with the...with the...Edexcel ... the last ... the latest accreditation ..I think it was pointed out there as well...so I mean we know it...and knowledge tells us...so we had to do something regarding continuing professional developmentit's a major operation...mean...eh...so...eh...we are going to eat the elephant in small pieces....I mean...I know ... the limitations as well ... currently ... I think there are more than 200 teachers involved ... and having a complicated or sophisticated professional development team ... is almost impossible...so...eh...we....try to be as simple and practical as possible...to start the ball rolling....as of this semester particularly....

Interviewer: How do we relate professional development with the school's development? And achievement of its mission?

D2: Well. They're very very close of course.....em....we have....I believe we have very well trained staff...I mean .most of them, as I mentioned earlier have ... most of them have gone through ... sort of basic in-service training ... courses and ... eh ... it's been a kind of

learning institution most of the time...this school...and most of the time, most of the teachers had the chances...to contribute to...the decision making procedures...I mean ... not necessarily as a member of the council or something ... the channels have always been open ... to a certain extent ... sometimes less, sometimes more ... but we've got that opportunity I think here ... so ... professional development ... I think is one of the key issues ... eh ...regarding the improvement of the school ... because at the end of the day ... the teachers are the key agents in the whole process ... em ... as they say, ... I mean ... the main stakeholders ... so ... as the institution ... or as the ... sort of ... the ... leadership can have the best mission ... vision ... in the world ... but ... unless this is shared with the staff and unless ... your staff are also .. Eh ... have got awareness on quality ... quality learning ... em ... it's very difficult to ... become a better or ... eh ... quality institution ... so ... professional development ... plays a vital role ... I think ...

Interviewer: Going back to what you have just said...on having a common vision ...do you think we have or there is a common vision at the moment in the school.....?

D2: Very hard to say so ... eh ... it is very difficult to have such a claim ... eh ... to me as a ... as a ... maybe ... I' wearing my teacher-trainer hat I actually... perhaps ...eh ... use my own ... adventure ... or use my own career ... eh ... part of this maybe and ... look at this ... eh ... in the past ... and ... eh ... the current situation ... and see ... what is happening in the classroom ... and what I notice ... eh ... in the classroom ... in my classroom and in my colleagues' ... this can be ... eh ... this can be novice or can be very experienced teachers ... em ... what happens in the classroom is ... not telling me that ... eh ... people ... or all the staff are ... aligned to the expectations or ... eh ... the quality ... high quality... especially regarding the main mission of a school which is ... language learning ... em ... it is very difficult claim so...

Interviewer: Can you elaborate a little bit on this like ...learning...language learning...and what is happening in the classroom...was it the same...before...eh...accreditation or has accreditation...had in the school ... now ... at the moment ... having an effect ... on standards ... is it different ... did it have any impact on it?

D2: Not yet, not yet ... eh ... Edexcel accreditation itself does not actually involve classroom observations or specific data ... collected from ... em ... the classroom ... or learning ... em ... I think they ... are more concerned with the implications of the ... eh ... the classroom teaching ... em ... you've got A, B and C ... and this might be deduced as there might be concern about quality teaching and quality learning

here ... but in terms of other ... eh ... accreditation ... eh ... bodies ... for example ... when we had the pre-inspection visit in 2008 ... eh ... I think something like 50% of our school was observed ... not all lessons but ... eh ... they had this 'buzz' or 'walk-in' observations ... and we have a very comprehensive report on the ... eh ... what is actually happening in the classroom ... and I'm still ... as ... eh ... a mentor now ... or was? As? ...by conducting classroom observations with the ... some of the part-time teachers ... don't have extensive teaching experience here ... and it's more or less the same and when I hear ... some teachers ... what is it ... teachers' resource center ... talk ... or when you ... or when you have a glance at what is happening at the photo-copier ... you can get some ideas ... eh ... about ... eh ... what *might* happen in the classroom actually ... and when you hear what they ... teachers talking in their offices ... eh ... for example ... I'm doing the Second Conditional ... I've just finished teaching First Conditional ... I'm focusing on ... the Simple Past ... it's a bit worrying ... for me ... eh ... we have ... eh ... done quite a lot in terms of improving our curriculum ... syllabus ... and ... eh ... the way we look at it ... *but* ... when it comes to actual classroom teaching ... I think we are still ... eh ... having some problems ... of .. eh ... understanding ... or ... maybe ... it may take some time for people to ... eh ... change ... their mindset ... maybe ... how they look at ... eh ... learning slash *learners* ... which is ... again a global problem ... because the whole world is ... discussing ELT contexts ... eh ... how to shift from teaching to ... eh ... learning or ... teacher to learner ... is a global issue ... and it's ... eh ... not very easy because ...you are given the privilege as a teacher to be the master in a classroom ... empowering students means disempowering yourself which may not be very very easy ... I mean ... this was ... eh ... one of the ... points raised in ... for example... in ... part of the 49 classroom visits ...when EQUALS ... eh ... this was one of the things ... major issues that we had to deal with

Interviewer: Two questions actually regarding this. The first one is about the world-wide, global situation, just a checking question actually, do you mean that...to some extent....the feedback you got from the accreditation bodies...maybe not necessarily directly from Edexcel but from EQUALS feedback as well ... has helped ... has had some kind of an impact on the revival of CPD in the school?

D2: Em ... ah ... it's difficult to say that at this stage ... I mean ... but at that time ... at that moment ...we immediately started having classroom visits ... like the director ... walking in ... fifteen minutes ... ten minutes ... classroom visits ... but mostly to get a general picture of the school ... and arrange ... maybe training workshops ... related on the findings ... outcomes ... I noticed during those visits ... em ... but as I've said ... mean ... that shift ... of philosophy ...

whole concept ... whole notion of looking at teaching, slash learning ... is not very easy ... I mean that change ... to happen ... so at that time ... I mean ... we had almost weekly ... eh ... workshops ... sessions ... to concentrate on more ... learner centred or learning centred approach to our teaching ... but after a certain period we ... eh ... sort of ... eh ... lost that momentum ... I can say ... it's very, very recent ... eh ... that we started ... in a slightly different form ... of our idea of professional development.

Interviewer: My question concerns the trigger. Was Edexcel a trigger at that time?

D2: At that time, actually...it was EQUALS...because the pre-inspection visit was a trigger ... yes ... after a long time we had very intensive training ... eh ... in-service training at school...but we had a kind of a kind of a ... what do they call it ... plateau stage ... and later on with EQUALS we had again ... eh ... that moment ... with Edexcel...yes...in a sense ... although they don't ... they didn't visit the classrooms ... in that sense ... it's implied ... because any ... eh ... accrediting body would question that...at least they will ask you ... "OK, you've got this, you've got that but what about the areas, i.e., what is happening in the classroom? what is your evidence? How can you make sure about that?" ... so with the group of teachers now ... we've got classroom visits, we've got peer observations ... but that's only limited to something like 18 or 19 part-time teachers ... the rest ... at the moment ... is only have ... kind of a ... this is actually from the teachers ... the data collected ... and we formed our own definition of continual professional development and it says ... there ... to teachers ... it should be self-initiated and needs based this is quite important ... so at the moment ... we can't jump into the classrooms or jump into conclusions regarding this but ... let's leave it to the teachers ... and they eventually ... through this reflection process ... they will set their targets, they will work on their targets, they will reflect on their targets ... their achievements and self-appreciation and appreciation in general ... and eventually this will have some kind of a positive impact ... but of course ... I meanthis is ... as we call ... a kind of transformative model of continual professional development ... so this gives more opportunities to the staff to contribute to the whole process and shape it up together ... because at certain points we collect feedback, shape it up, modify it adapt it...adopt some other ideas ... eh ... this is the idea.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the leadership's role in this whole initiative ... like ... eh ...we talked about ... eh...people sharing ideas....we talked about a transformative approach to learning...what is the leadership's role ... what do you feel about it?

D2: I can say on the whole ... very positive ... eh ... regarding our area especially ... we have usually long meetings ... sometimes discussions ... sometimes more fights (*laughter*) ... emm ... But ... I have to explain it ... there has to be ... this has to come from the bottom ... it's a kind of bottom-up approach ... the whole idea of quality ... the whole idea of professional development ... it's not very easy to implement something which is not appreciated or ... eh ... when people don't have enough information ... awareness ... about such crucial ... or sensitive issues ... especially professional development ... I mean it's not very easy to tell people that you need professional development ... you need to improve yourself ... you need to develop as a teacher ... like ... it has to come from the bottom ... and leadership I *think* ... is doing ... is ok with that ... I mean they give chances to the people to express their opinions ... how ... how much or ... the teachers make use of that ... eh ... I'm not sure ... I think the channels are open most of the time ... as long as they are ... what can I say ... in a constructive manner.

Interviewer: And you aren't sure the teachers are using the channels because ...you're not sure about

D2: Well ... I mean ... I'm probably referring to ...very limited practice here ... for example ...when we try to collect information about their professional needs ... the person responsible for that ... for example ... sent everybody ... eh ... a very simple questionnaire ... through a survey monkey ... and "can you please tell us ... so that we can plan ... budget the training priorities ... and out of probably 200 people ... 30 something teachers responded to that ... so ... em ... maybe based on that ... maybe that wasn't the right channel of communication ... maybe that's not a very effective channel ... but ... eh ... sometimes, I mean ... I see this in some other areas ... and eh ... I don't want to make ... eh ... of course ... generalizations here ... but sometimes ... I think it's not working ... as it should be working ... let's say ... I mean ... eh ... I would expect at least of the half the school ... giving feedback and ..em ... and we could have ... eh ... a better picture of the whole ... area of their professional needs.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the leadership acknowledges the new ideas when they're brought up ..or ...these contributions?

D2: Emm ... well ... again ... I mean ... largely ... yes ... largely yes ... eh ... there are a variety of channels for teachers to...express their opinions ... I mean ... corridor talk ... of course is not ... wanted (*laughter*)....complaining for them ... eh ... well, there is Curriculum Development Committee regarding ... especially the academic proposals ... it meets at least three timeswhen necessary maybe 4 times a year ... to look into such proposals ... if it

is academic ... em there are council ... eh ... channels ... but I believe ... eh ... the last time ... when we have 6 positions ... for the teacher representatives ... eh ... for the last two, three years ... I think there were almost none ... or 1 or 2 of our colleagues ... who want to be a member of that ... I mean ... and ... eh ... that's why mostly it's the leadership's agenda ... most of the time ... that we discuss and make decisions at that level ... so ... these channels are there ... and also I mean ... the teaching team meetings are another ... perhaps ... way of giving feedback and contributing but we can also .. eh ... find other means of inviting people's feedback on certain issues ... I know Ayse did a focus group ... eh ... study which was very useful ... which was I ... believe ... more with curricular issues or ... eh ... I'm not sure ... but ... I mean ... that's another way ... eh ... I'm planning to have a kind of ... an open spaces ... style of collecting feedback at the end of the semester ... with the teachers ... which is basically you raise the issue and ... eh ... you ask people to ... em ... give you feedback on certain areas ... first you identify the priority areas and then the people who suggest those areas become the team leader and all the people who are interested in that area ... they meet ... say in a classroom ... in a room and they work for one ... one and a half ... two hours ... and they ... again get together as a team and report their outcomes to the big group and this ... turn into their own responsibility as well ... the things that they put together ... the school needs change regarding ... let's say portfolio ... OK. I'm interested in portfolio ... with people we work together and they come up with a kind of action plan and I'll be doing this, I'll be doing that ... and they take on actually...generally the responsibility to do such things because they are the people who are interested specifically in that area...you don't have to form extra other working groups to work on this and they usually are...sort of eh...what do they call it...ad hoc kind of committees ... when they finish that particular task ... that's the end of it..

Interviewer: ...em ... I was going to ask something else ... I got carried away with what you were saying ... (*laughter*) ... em ... I was going to ask actually ... what do you think is ... em ... keeping people from contributing ... because ... em ... you said like ... the survey ... or council membership ... a few people volunteered ... what do you think is keeping people from volunteering?

D2: It could be various reasons ... eh ... now ... eh ... especially the experienced staff ... among many, many positive things ... sometimes you can observe not so desirable ... lets say ... em ... behaviour ... attitude ... at a certain point in their career ... when you look at our staff ... think it's something like ... average ... eh ... is nearly 20 years of experience ... this is a ... kind of a time when they *might* ... might say, "I don't need more of ... for example, training? ... I

know..enough..I've done this, I've done that ... change? ... I don't like change ... another one ... I was reading this article the other day ... em ... they may have a concept ... or they may build a kind of concept ... about the leadership ... 'we' and 'them'... type of thing ... distinction ... some of them might choose to be a member of an extra-responsibility group just because they want to get away from teaching ... this is another ... the other end maybe ... "I don't want that much of teaching anymore, I want to do something different" ... and some might ... on the other end of the maybe pendulum ... some might say ..."no. don't touch me. I just want to focus on my teaching. I just want to work with a focus"... don't forget ... I mean ... eh ... I don't know ... perhaps ... is a social ... cultural aspect ... perhaps ... I don't want to say ... I don't agree, of course ... (*laughter*) ... but perhaps this is the time when they ... are ... eh ... get married ... this is when their kids are growing ... so life/work balance ... life has got more priorities maybe in their lives ... I don't know ... perhaps ... another dimension is that too ... "I have to be there to collect my son..." ... well ... I mean ...we hear such things as well ..."the meeting's over ... at four o'clock I have to collect my son ... this and that"... they are trying to get the ... maybe ... balance right as well ... but a teacher in that respect ... is purely concentrating on their work ... job ... em ... I mean ... as I said ... among many of the positive things ... you can also observe such things as well ... so there's a variety of reasons ... as I said .. I mean ..."I want to work with one focus ... and that's my classroom teaching ... full stop" ... Fair enough ... I mean for some people ... yes.

Interviewer: Can I ask you something else related to this ... do you feel that you are encouraged by the leadership to these ... like TTMs or CDC or ... like bringing new ideas into the whole picture or suggesting solutions to problems ... do you feel that you can?

D2: Yes...yes....sure....I feel appreciated as well...

Interviewer: OK ... I'm not sure if I can ask you this question like ... was it the same before ... we actually talked about it ... like ... there is some change but in this sense as well ... it is too early to see the ... I don't know?

D2: Emmmm...

Interviewer: What do you think about the future or where are we with respect to the past ...now?

D2: I think that we've made ... eh ... crucial ... eh ... steps forward ... I mean ... em ... I'm not referring just to ... emmm ... to the Edexcel accreditation but ... that was another motive, I think, in this respect ... now as ... for example ... as the ... as the ... advisory body ... the

advisory committee ... now ... it is our revised ... let's say job description ... now is to make sure that all these policies, all these ... things that we've put together ... wonderful things ... are actually happening ... especially in terms of the classroom ... what is happening in the classroom ... so it's not enough to put together, as I probably said earlier ... I'm repeating myself ... I know but ... the best curriculum in the world aligned to ... this and that ... the best materials, course books and the best ... eh ... tests ... but for me ... eh ... one ... I would like to maybe ... this is my ... eh ... weakness (*laughter*) ... I would love to ... see ... some ... learning ... or *learner-centered* ... learner ... as ... "learner-merged" instead of ... "learner-emerged" style ... in our teaching as well ... in terms of ... and also ... and also ... em ... what would put our curriculum, syllabus ... this is ok ... I mean ... this has been approved by Edexcel ... but ... another approval I think should come ... again from ... perhaps another external accrediting body ... like international exams ... and if ... it would be a wonderful place ... I think ... if all our students should have internationally accredited exams ... as well ... as well as our own exams ... and that would give our school ... especially the curriculum area ... syllabus area ... a very valuable insight about ... this is what we claim by the end of this module ... sorry ... by the end of this course ... our students ... should have ... could have achieved ... would be able to do this ... OK ... and now this is approved by ... various exam centers as well ... so ... maybe this is sort of ... very utopic at the moment ... but ... I mean ... in an ideal school ... I'm not putting more emphasis on ... sort of ... what *they* can do ... and what we can't do ... but at the end of the day ... em ... quality check or quality management ... is ... ok ... yes ... your own perceptions or your own mechanisms ... but also you need the validation of that as well, I think ... eh ... because there are many other factors ... I'm not saying that we are not good at this ... we are good at this ... but there are other internal factors ... em ... i.e., ... the university higher administration has imposed certain ... eh ... decisions on ... the exit level, for example, of the school ... I mean ... this directly ... eh ... is a kind of a sabotage ... for me ... eh ... where we are after certain quality standards ... em ... and all of a sudden ... now all the students ... are equal (*laughter*) ... sorry ... all the students are students ... there is no ... sort of ... repeat ... there's no more second year in prep school ... "We mark those students ... ok ... B2 ... now B1 is ok ... well, some departments are still saying the B1 is not OK, B2 ... one or two ... but what is happening again ... em ... well, ... B1 again is something ... is a concept ... it's evidence again ... should be some kind of an exam ... perhaps validated by external bodies as well ... I'm glad to see ... so many students now are taking ... especially City and Guilds exam ... because my office mate is a team member ... so I can see ... eh ... our office is on the ground floor ... so every now and then we have students coming and

asking ... getting information ... or registering for the exam, as well ... so, I think that is valuable ... eh ... input ... sorry insight information to maybe

Interviewer: Benchmark....

D2: Benchmark ... yeh ... you know the fancy words (*laughter*) ... yeh ... benchmarking ... eh ...”Look how many students took this ... 20 students! What level were they? This level”...so does this...our benchmarking correlate ... it gives us some information about that ... and also ... em ... what we are trying to do in terms of ... eh ... observations ... what is actually happening in the classroom ... of course ... observations is very very sensitive issue because ... you are observing only 50 minutes of a long career ... and you can’t make ... eh ... sort of claims or judgments about a person’s career ... by watching only ... eh ... a little bit of observation ... eh ... but ... I’m not interested in the individual ... sort of ... outcomes of observations ... but trying to take the whole ... I’m trying to ... sort of ... see the whole picture here.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much.

D2: Is that it?

Interviewer: I think so. I did need to ask this long list of questions. Can I listen to our interview and if I have any further questions, can I come back to you?

D2: Sure...sure

Interviewer: Thank you. Would you like to add anything else? Any further comments?

D2: Emmm ... well ... eh ... the only comment perhaps I can add at this moment is ... we’ve got the accreditation ... eh ... at first in EPS and later on in the Modern Languages Division ... eh ... this can be kind of a wish perhaps ... eh ... how weight of ... trying to evolve the Modern Languages Division ... which is not as compact as we are ... they’ve got this sort of eh ... eh ... logistic ... let’s say ... disadvantage ... perhaps how to reach out ... especially regarding ... em ... some sort of benchmarking ... I don’t know how many students, for example, are taking IELTS or ... eh ... other courses ... I know there is a ... eh ... quite important TOLES venture in Law ... I hear some students are taking this but I don’t know exactly the figures, what is happening ... because there was something like...more than a hundred elective courses ... or courses in general offered in Modern Languages Division ... now ... come on...this should be more compact operation ... and we asked all the teams in

the Modern Languages Division to perhaps aim for a realistic ... eh ..
.kind of a ... eh ... international accredited exams ... and our elective
courses can serve towards those ... eh ... ends ... maybe ... eh ...
that's one way ... to ... eh ... reach out ... to there as well ... and
hopefully ... maybe by the support of ... the Curriculum
Development Committee ...we can work ...we can achieve certain
benchmarking ... and ... because at the end of the day this is ONE
WHOLE BIG SCHOOL!!

Interviewer: Thank you.

D2: Thank you

Transcript conventions:

- Pauses are indicated by means of '...'
- Emphasized phrases, words or parts of words are italicised and boldened